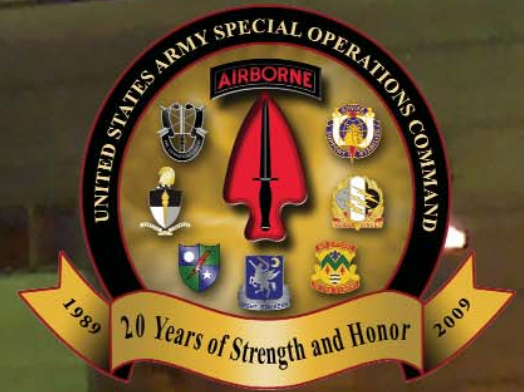


TIP OF THE SPEAR

USASOC
celebrates

20



Years

- ♠ **USSOCOM commander issues 2010 guidance**
- ♠ **Special Forces Medal of Honor recipient dies**
- ♠ **20th anniversary of Operation Just Cause in Panama**

USASOC marks 20th anniversary 12



Tip of the Spear

Adm. Eric T. Olson
Commander, USSOCOM

CSM Thomas Smith
Command Sergeant Major

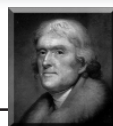
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Best magazine format in DoD 2007 and 2008

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Front cover: USASOC headquarters, located in the MG Robert A. McClure Building at Fort Bragg, N.C., and is named in honor of the general who led the development of psychological warfare during World War II. Photo by Walter Sokalski.

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U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND - HEADQUARTERS

2010 Commander's guidance

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide guidance for 2010 to special operations commands and personnel.

Our Nation holds the highest expectations of its Special Operations Forces. We are expected to be consummate professionals – mature, highly trained and fiercely independent warriors. We must excel under the most demanding conditions while accomplishing some of the most difficult and sensitive tasks, often with limited specific guidance. My intent is that 2010 is a year during which we will rededicate ourselves to the principles that have defined SOF and our historic successes.

We in the special operations community have great cause to be extremely proud of the force we provide to operational commanders around the world. Under pressure, in ambiguous circumstances, on the edge, our force is performing superbly. We have been recognized and highlighted for the imaginative approaches to warfare by our planners, the technical wizardry of our staffs, the specialized excellence of our supporting personnel, and the skill, boldness and raw courage of our operators in the field.

We in SOF know that it is in our DNA to continuously scrutinize ourselves, to fearlessly address our shortfalls, to lead change. We must always anticipate new realities, appreciate nuances, understand the operational context of our evolving strategic environments, and move ahead of the wave. Although we can be quite satisfied with the condition and quality of our force, there is still much more to do.

My three priorities upon which all special operations forces need to focus – mission, people, and equipment – remain unchanged. First, our mission to deter, disrupt, and defeat terrorist threats remains one of steadfast commitment and unwavering resolve. Second, we must develop and support our people and their families, and instill in all our assigned forces the SOF mindset. And finally, we must continue to sustain and modernize the force through rapid and focused acquisition processes.

The focus of effort by special operations forces in 2010 will be on optimizing SOF-peculiar contributions to global stability with emphasis on the continuing conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, and on the growing challenges in Pakistan, Yemen, the Horn of Africa and the Trans-

Saharan region. We will sustain our efforts in Colombia and Republic of the Philippines while taking advantage of every opportunity to support smaller scale efforts in countries with high potential for future crises.

Special operations forces are diverse in their missions, capabilities and cultures. We are many tribes joined by commonality of overall purpose. In 2010, we will seek to optimize the relevance and contributions of each element of SOF while strengthening the entire SOF team. In so doing, we will strive for increased interoperability with our partners from the General Purpose Forces, other government agencies, other nations and international organizations – the contributions of our partners in these organizations are essential to our success. Underlying every decision and action will be an understanding of, and appreciation for, the unique characteristics of our force.

Special operations forces can take great pride in our historical ability to recruit and retain quality personnel. Over many years, the men and women of SOF have proven that they are especially motivated, innovative, tenacious, physically fit, mentally tough and ethically sound. Our operational tenets are built on the themes of agility, speed, teamwork, professional excellence, constant pursuit of victory and intolerance of failure.

Within special operations forces, substance trumps theatrics, knowledge trumps doctrine, and finesse trumps mass. Our successes have resulted from cleverness, persistence and the personal knowledge of each others' abilities that results from frequent interaction over the course of our careers. Growing SOF too quickly or diluting our "SOF-ness" through rapid or temporary integration of too many non-SOF personnel will be to our detriment.

In 2010, we will strive to do the best we can with what we have in accordance with our priorities, which reflect the priorities of operational commanders. We will



Adm. Eric T. Olson

make every effort to apply the right force to the right missions, make our headquarters elements more efficient, commit to longer deployments in non-combat and supporting roles, eliminate unnecessary positions and processes, and focus our resources and energies on the tactical elements and individual SOF operators. We do not all play equal roles in the operational forces, and our priorities must work to the advantage of those who will face combat, assume greater personal risk, live by their wits or represent us in far-away places alone or in small groups.

In general, 2010 will be a year of “tighten up” for the SOF community in order to ensure we are in fact doing what is most important. Or, as many of you have heard me say in recent months, we will concentrate our institutional efforts on the third phase of Ready, Fire, Aim. We were very Ready on 9/11, we have been Firing with great effect since then, but now it is time to adjust our Aim in response to the changing nature of the conflicts that so undeniably require that SOF be at the top of our game.

We must also continuously scrutinize our organizations, processes, procedures and equipment inventories to identify and eliminate the redundancies and inefficiencies that seem to creep into our activities. We will also determine through analysis which of our recently procured equipment systems do not need to be sustained in our motor pools and warehouses.

Successful special operations result more from a mindset than a skill set. Let’s cultivate the creativity, aggressiveness, thoughtfulness, regional expertise, independence, warrior ethos, humility and even some of the renegade spirit that established SOF as the preeminent force in complex and sensitive operations. To help do this, let’s review and refresh the concepts of special warfare, unconventional warfare, psychological operations, counterinsurgency warfare, guerilla warfare, remote area operations, counterterrorism, counterproliferation and stability operations as they apply uniquely to special operations forces.

At the same time, we will continue to press ahead with vigor in our pursuit of techniques and technologies that mitigate our adversaries’ inherent advantages. Each of the major organizations of SOF must focus on what it is expected to do best. “Full-spectrum capabilities” is a term that applies to the total SOF force, not to all of our individual units. Every unit and sub-unit must master its trade before expanding beyond it. Incentivize the development of the highest-value capabilities. Let go of

the lowest-value capabilities.

We cannot sustain our effectiveness without the enduring support of our families. We are asked to do a great many things to protect our Nation, and all of them place additional demands on those who are closest to us. Continuing care for our wounded or injured warriors, and for the families of those who have been seriously injured or killed, is among our most solemn responsibilities.

As we move ahead:

- Look forward, push forward. If forward, reach back.
- Synergize the effects of National Mission Forces and Theater Mission Forces whenever feasible.
- Steep selected individuals in language and regional/sub-regional knowledge.
- Increase individual and small-unit engagements outside of OEF and OIF.
- Harden up, lighten up, be agile. Never sacrifice effectiveness for expedience or convenience.
- Communicate. Increase human interaction at every level.
- Do not outsource thinking; foster creative thought across our force.
- Reaffirm the logic and purpose of our systems, processes and actions.
- Spread commitments and opportunities across the elements of our force that are capable of responding to them.
- Eliminate “hobbyism,” parochialism and arrogance from our force by doing what we ought to do, not what we want to do.
- Be courageous in moving the best people to the key positions.
- Procure specialized equipment for missions, not for morale.
- Enforce OPSEC. SOF operations are sensitive and our people and their families deserve the protection that silence helps provide.

I am convinced that the talent, energy, experience and courage resident within SOF – the pure quality of our people and our underlying ethos – will contribute to an ever-increasing demand for our force. The powerful effects of SOF in the areas where our forces are properly employed are often recognized as game-changers. And, our force operates optimally without frills, drama or fanfare. It is up to all of us to ensure that we train hard, respect our own standards, uphold our own values and instill the right mindset in our headquarters, staff, operators and support personnel.



GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM - IRAQ
COMBINED JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS TASK FORCE – ARABIAN PENINSULA

Emergency Response Brigade policemen pull security during an early morning operation. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Michael Blackwell.

Security agreement advances Emergency Response Brigade mission

By Sgt. Jeffrey Ledesma

Special Operations Task Force – Central Public Affairs

In the 1990s, the Iraqi television screens were plastered with poverty. According to the commander of the Emergency Response Brigade Staff Brig. Gen. No'aman Jewad, children were dying of starvation and, with frequent famines, whole families would go to sleep without food.

However, the blood of more than 13,000 American and Iraqi military forces has been spent in an effort to bring the idea of democracy to the Iraqi people in hopes of a better Iraq. It's true that Iraq has paid an insurmountable price, No'aman said, and although democracy is a relatively new concept for this country, Iraq has passed the difficult initial stage of building their democratic nation.

Despite the changes implemented by the U.S. and

Iraqi Security Agreement, the counterterrorism unit of elite Iraqi police continues to stand proactive against Iraq's insurgent groups.

"The Emergency Response Brigade had a very small change in their operations," No'aman said about his brigade after June 30. The type and frequency of missions are the same and have continued without issues.

The commander admitted that prior to the Security Agreement's highly publicized milestone the operational approval process was simpler.

"After the thirtieth," No'aman explained, "there was a new system in place. Not only did they have to obtain permission from the Ministry of Interior, they now had to obtain notification from the Iraqi Operational Coordination Group."

Besides the new approval process for combat operations, there have been a few basic changes on the ground level. "When we were walking the streets, [Americans] would be leading us before, and now it's the Iraqi vehicles that are leading," said No'aman.

Since U.S. troops withdrew from Iraqi cities, the Emergency Response Brigade has been focusing on areas where American forces once engaged. No'aman said the last thing he wants is for special groups to re-emerge in these unoccupied pockets throughout Iraq.

"These areas will need continuous missions," claimed No'aman. Although the areas of focus have been altered by the current guidelines surrounding the placement of American forces, the unit's objective has remained constant since the beginning — metaphorically cemented in stone the day they were formed.

"Our main mission is to get rid of terrorists from north to south to east to west without any discrimination," No'aman described. "It doesn't matter what religion, what sects, what ethnicity he is — a terrorist is a terrorist."

Although a criminal is a criminal, the brigade's leadership enforces the ideology of treating everyone — even insurgents — with a sense of dignity and civility. "I respect his family, I respect their human rights, and my brigade treats them with total professionalism," the general declared. "I don't accept mistakes."

The brigade, which is comprised of six battalions, has had little to no time to slow down. No'aman said the brigade's workload is continuous.

"Sometimes they don't even have time to just sit and rest," he claimed. Nonetheless, the elite police force has harvested many successes from hard work.

According to No'aman, the element of success in each mission is different; the greatest successes can be found when looking at the larger picture. He noted the unit's quality leadership, the rigorous training events, the logistical structure and the brigade's dedication to challenge any form of sectarianism and racism within their ranks as true successes.

"The most important thing is the good relationship we have with our friends, the Americans," No'aman added. "They have had a hand in making all these successes a reality."

No'aman spoke with a sense of patriotism and pride as he discussed the history of his brigade.

"We support the government, and, as an officer, it is my duty to do so," No'aman explained. He also said he trusts the Iraqi government to make the best possible decisions for the country.

"People are feeling now that it is secure and stable. They no longer have that fear they had before," No'aman said. "Now it's a civilian life and we have good relations with people all over the world, especially with the United States."

Obviously, he continued, everyone wants their country to feel safe and stable, and this is something any regular person desires no matter what country he or she calls home.

"My wish is bigger than this," No'aman clarified. "I want the Iraqi person to understand what democracy and freedom means, and I want to see them apply and implement it. We want our country to be successful. I want Iraq to make advancements in its agriculture, industry, education, and every field."

According to the commanding officer, even though he wants the country to continue its path of progress, many improvements have already taken place.

"Now children are happy. Life has truly changed," No'aman said. "This is the truth that the American people should know about the people here."



Members of the Emergency Response Brigade stand ready to train on an Iraqi military compound. Photo illustration by Petty Officer 2nd Class Michael Blackwell.



GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM - IRAQ
COMBINED JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS TASK FORCE – ARABIAN PENINSULA

Special Forces Soldiers, ERB partner to build up hospital in Suwayrah

By Special Operations Task Force – Central Public Affairs

The people of a small city located approximately 40 miles southeast of the Iraqi capital recently had reason for celebration.

The hospital in Suwayrah, Iraq, received its largest improvement project and upgrade to modern medical technology since it was founded in 1958.

The local hospital provides medical treatment for the citizens of Suwayrah and a large number of surrounding rural communities, serving a total of approximately 160,000 Iraqi citizens.

Dr. Nasir, a pediatrician and general director of the hospital, said he was extremely pleased. He added that his pediatric ward and obstetrics department will enjoy most of the benefits.

According to Nasir, the children of the hospital will ultimately benefit the most by receiving care with the use of modern equipment and advanced medical supplies. Incubators, lithotomic position beds, nebulizers, pediatric weight scales, and spectrophotometers are just some of the items included in the assistance package.

The project came about through the hard work of many people – American Soldiers and Iraqi nationals alike. Special Forces Soldiers met with 19 local sheikhs to identify and discuss many concerns of the local populace in August. While the infrastructure improvements needed in Wasit province are many, the tribal leaders unanimously supported the idea of improving the hospital. The team of SF Soldiers agreed and initiated the project.

With significant support from the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force – Arabian Peninsula and Special Operations Task Force - Central, the Special Forces detachment navigated the processes normally reserved for civil affairs experts and saw the project through.

A Soldier in the detachment said the assistance provided to the local community is a good example of how a small

Special Forces team operating at the tactical level can leave a lasting effect at the operational and strategic levels. Only a few years ago, SF Soldiers operating in all provinces of Iraq achieved the same effects through kinetic operations and precise targeting of insurgent networks, he explained.

According to a team member, stability and support operations are becoming more prevalent in the environment in which SF detachments currently operate in Iraq. In order to maintain the successes achieved during 2007 and 2008, securing popular support by creating economic opportunities and ensuring basic services for the population is critical, claimed the SOTF-C Soldier.

When a community of more than 160,000 is in dire need of essential health services, it is time to make a sizable and enduring effort to win the hearts and minds of the Iraqis, he added. Through a “can-do” attitude and help from the civil affairs planners, the detachment completed the \$205,000 project in just over three months.

“It was time, money and effort well spent when the popular support is so important to achieve the regional strategic objectives of the United States,” he added.



An Iraqi woman and her child wait to receive a winter coat and a stuffed animal in the new pediatric ward at the newly improved hospital in Suwayrah, Iraq, Nov. 26. Courtesy photo.

ERB gives computers to youth center

*Story and photo by Sgt. Brandon Pomrenke
Special Operations Task Force – North Public
Affairs*

Iraqi Security Forces have been making gains in the overall safety of the Iraqi people, but on Dec. 16, the mission for them was slightly different.

An Emergency Response Battalion in northern Iraq had the opportunity to bring several computers to a youth center in Mujamma, Iraq, to replace those confiscated during a recent warranted security operation.

In November, personnel from the ERB served arrest warrants for individuals thought to be utilizing the youth center's facilities for terrorist activities. Included in the evidence collected were several computers from the youth center meant to further the education of local families and children within the community.

Today, the ERB personnel were able to replace the confiscated computers. As several families and children looked on with curious faces, the computers were hand delivered to the center with the youth center manager standing ready to receive the much needed hardware.

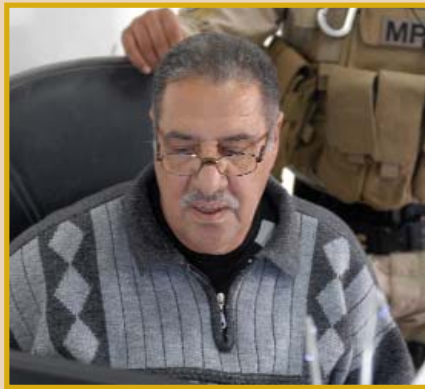
The computers were used to give teachers experience with the systems and to help young Iraqis learn to read, as well as teach them to learn English, said Zuhair Raajb al-Kilidaar, the youth center manager.

"We want people to learn English," he said. "In this time, the English language is very important. The children start learning from the third grade in grammar school."

The ability to learn English at the youth center gives the children opportunities they may not have had before. It also gives local teachers access to the children in the area to educate them and have positive interaction in the community.

"We had a meeting with teachers and they said they could support the classes and were ready to teach," Zuhair explained. "We will have our people take courses in grammar and punctuation, and then we will have them read."

Local Iraqis get more than just an education at the center. They can choose from a variety of classes that



Zuhair Raajb al-Kilidaar, the Mujamma Youth Center manager, shows a member of the Emergency Response Battalion his computer programs in Kirkuk, Iraq.

range from crafts to sports, and for some, it is also a place to socialize.

"Actually, we are working with them to use computers, play sports, lift weights and to be tailors," said Zuhair. "We try to get people over to participate in sporting events."

For some, the help does not stop with education and sports, but continues as other aspects of life.

"The center takes care of people," said Zuhair. "For example, we had a guy who started at the youth center when he was three. When he was older and wanted to marry, we helped to support them. Everything is good for the Iraqi people in this area."

The mission of the Mujamma Youth Center is often furthered with aid from outsiders as well.

"We have no relationships with any political movements here," expressed Zuhair. "We don't have any relationships with [them]. Everything [here] is good for the Iraqi people and we continue to work on it."

The replacement of these computers will allow the center to get back to work. ERB personnel took the computers during their mission along with other evidence in November, but they replaced them to keep the center running.

The operation sought out those who would impede the safety and security of Iraq. When the opportunity presented itself, however, the ERB found a way to continue serving the families and children of the Mujamma community by replacing the equipment they collected.



GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM - IRAQ
JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS TASK FORCE - PHILIPPINES

Civil Affairs Soldiers receive recognition for Philippine service

By Sgt. Tony Hawkins
USASOC Public Affairs

Fifteen members of Charlie Company, 97th Civil Affairs Battalion, were awarded foreign service medals from the Armed Forces of the Philippines during a ceremony at the John F. Kennedy Auditorium.

The medals were presented by Filipino Brig. Gen. Antonio Supnet, the defense and military attaché of the Embassy of the Philippines in Washington, D.C., for the Soldiers' outstanding service during their recent nine-month deployment to the Central Mindanao region of the Philippines. Two of the Soldiers, including Maj. Winston Marbella, the Charlie Company commander, received the Military Merit Medal, which is equivalent to the Meritorious Service Medal, while the other 13 Soldiers received the Military Civic-Action Medal.

"I am deeply honored and privileged to be here," Supnet said. "The AFP recognizes the value of working side by side with the U.S. Joint Special Operations Task Force, and more particularly the Civil Affairs teams that you have, which have helped in terms of defeating the terrorists and aiding in improving the conditions required to achieve peace, stability and progress in my country."

The awardees also received words of acclamation from Lt. Gen. John Mulholland Jr., commanding general of the U.S. Army Special Operations Command, during the ceremony.

"A fellow partner and allied nation has recognized that your performance of duty has reached a level that



Fifteen members of Charlie Company, 97th Civil Affairs Battalion, were awarded foreign service medals from the Armed Forces of the Philippines during a ceremony at the John F. Kennedy Auditorium. USASOC Public Affairs photo.

they would decorate you with national medals to signify that service, which is truly a great honor," Mulholland said.

Mulholland further commented on the unique shared history of the U.S. and Philippines, during which many "Filipinos and Americans fought, bled and died together against common enemies for generations." He also echoed the words of U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines Kristie Kenney, in that Americans and Filipinos "are more than friends or allies; we are family."

"To that end, these Soldiers are helping our brothers and sisters in their efforts to bring permanent peace and stability to the people of the Philippines," Mulholland said. "Our Civil Affairs Soldiers are helping change the conditions that give rise to terrorism, subversion and insurgency, alongside their comrades of the Filipino Armed Forces."

Despite the challenging environment, barriers of cultural background and language, and the restricted movement during their deployment to the Philippines, the Soldiers of Charlie Company worked with AFP personnel and local government units in dozens of projects. At least 41 new schools, local government buildings, water wells, roads and other infrastructure projects were constructed, and they conducted 68 medical and dental civic action programs. During these civic action programs, more than 8,800 Filipino civilians received medical, dental, optometry and minor surgical treatment. Nearly 1,200 animals received treatment or vaccination during the veterinary projects.

The CA Soldiers' efforts personally touched Supnet, who formerly commanded a unit based in the area the teams operated in.

"As the former commander of 104th Infantry Brigade of the Filipino Army, deployed to the province of Sulu, I was a direct recipient of the invaluable support of the Civil Affairs team," Supnet said. "You have helped my brigade in bringing humanitarian assistance to our people in conflict-affected areas. We could not have done what we have achieved if not for your support and assistance."

The awardees expressed sincere gratitude for receiving the honors, though many said they were just doing the job they went to do: provide assistance to and improve the lives of the people of the Philippines.

"This is a very big deal, being recognized by a foreign government and showing us what we're doing over there has a strong impact on the people," said Capt. Jennifer Gotie, who served as team leader for CAT 733 during the deployment. There's nothing really better than this job, and this was the best mission so far. One of the biggest programs our team did was called Fishing for Peace. Hopefully it will be a continued project that can enrich and better the lives of thousands upon thousands of people in central Mindanao and throughout the Philippines."

Supnet closed the ceremony with remarks of admiration for the awardees.

"The nonstop work has made a substantial difference in the lives of our people," he said. "With this achievement, the awardees, you have earned not only my gratitude, but also my respect and adoration."

Soldiers who received awards are:

Military Merit Medal

Maj. Winston Marbella

Capt. Alfonso Deveyra

Military Civic-Action Medal

Maj. Tad Gilbert

Maj. James Wilson

Maj. Janette Kautzman

Capt. Jennifer Gotie

Sgt. 1st Class Anand Budhu

Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Embery

Sgt. 1st Class Kevin Fisher

Sgt. 1st Class Marcus Smith

Staff Sgt. Willie Battle

Staff Sgt. Noah Hales

Staff Sgt. Douglas Jones

Staff Sgt. Richard Schuster

Sgt. Aaron Walla



AIRBORNE



U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

USASOC marks its 20th year of service

By USASOC Public Affairs



U.S. Army Special Operations Command headquarters is located at Fort Bragg, N.C. Photo by Walter Sokalski.

“The Quiet Professionals” of the U.S. Army’s Special Operations Command have been operating at the forefront of the War on Terror since the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, and continue to make great contributions worldwide. The operations tempo for Army Special Operations Forces has never been greater and is not likely to decrease in the near future.

Fort Bragg is home to a large portion of the Army’s Special Operations units and personnel. Of about 27,000 personnel serving within USASOC, a little more than 10,000 men and women are located Fort Bragg, N.C., assigned to USASOC’s headquarters and multiple subordinate commands.

Reaching its 20th year of service this December, and headquartered at Fort Bragg, the three-star command is led by Lt. Gen. John Mulholland, with forces conducting Special Operations across the full spectrum of warfare. USASOC’s Soldiers employ warfighting skills ranging from exceptional individual tactical skills, to the most advanced and demanding collective combat capabilities, to skills requiring an advanced appreciation of human behavior.

USASOC Soldiers and units frequently employ both cutting edge technology as well as primitive solutions to accomplish their missions.

On any given day, elements of three of the five active duty Special Forces Groups, units from the two National Guard Special Forces Groups, one Ranger Battalion, about 36 Special Operations aircraft, and more than 35 Civil Affairs teams and 35 Psychological Operations teams and sustainment brigade logistics units are deployed around the world. Though only about five percent of the Army, USASOC is the largest of the service components that make up U.S. Special Operations Command, and provides about 70 percent of the Special Operations personnel in U.S. Central Command’s theater.

For those in USASOC, the pace is fast, however morale and job satisfaction have seldom been greater. Combined with some of the best equipment and training of any military force in the world, USASOC has never lost

sight that the key to winning the fight is the quality of its Soldiers. Now, the single largest airborne command in the Army, the majority of Army Special Operations Soldiers are specifically assessed and selected to meet the demanding requirements of the specific formations. Following successful selection, USASOC Soldiers undergo comprehensive and demanding training programs that prepare them for assignments within the operational units. After eight years of war, USASOC’s ranks are now as experienced and well-seasoned as they’ve ever been. USASOC has a “backbone” of impeccably trained, seasoned noncommissioned officers that take quiet, professional pride in executing missions with excellence, honor and valor.

In his agenda for defense, President Barack Obama stated, “We must build up our Special Operations Forces, Civil Affairs, Information Operations and other units and capabilities.” The demand for Special Operations personnel, skills and training is high. As a result, USASOC’s units are experiencing growth and associated reorganization to meet current and future requirements worldwide. USASOC is committed to maintaining the world’s finest ground Special Operations Force.



Lt. Gen. John Mulholland, commander of U.S. Army Special Operations Command. Courtesy photo.

Continued on next page

Tip of the Spear



U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

Seven principle Army Special Operations units

The seven principle units that make up USASOC include the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School and the U.S. Army Special Forces Command, both headquartered at Fort Bragg. Also located at Fort Bragg are the 4th Psychological Operations Group, 95th Civil Affairs Brigade and 528th Sustainment Brigade. Two other key units of Army Special Operations are the 75th Ranger Regiment, headquartered at Fort Benning, Ga., and the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, headquartered at Fort Campbell, Ky.

The command also provides oversight of two Army National Guard Special Forces groups, the 19th, located in Draper, Utah, and the 20th out of Birmingham, Ala., in coordination with the National Guard Bureau and state adjutants general.

The U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School is responsible for selecting, training and educating Special Operations Forces, as well as leader development. The school teaches more than 10,000 students in more than 60 different courses each year.

The center and school's 1st Special Warfare Training Group conducts a wide variety of Special Operations training, including the qualification courses for Special Forces, Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations as well as advanced capabilities such as military freefall operations. Advanced combat medical training is provided by the Special Warfare Medical Group, which is responsible for all U.S. Military Special Operations Forces' combat medical training, including Army Rangers, Army Civil Affairs medics and Navy corpsmen.

Warrior diplomats

Bestowing the "Green Beret" upon Special Forces at Fort Bragg in 1961, President John F. Kennedy called the distinctive headgear "a symbol of excellence, a badge of courage, a mark of distinction in the fight for freedom." That standard of excellence continues to distinguish those who have earned the Special Forces tab. Created in 1952, U.S. Army Special Forces take their lineage from several World War II organizations,

namely the First Special Services Force (the Devil's Brigade), the Alamo Scouts and, in particular, the famous Office of Strategic Services.

Within U.S. Army Special Forces Command, there are five active Special Forces groups and two U.S. Army National Guard groups, each regionally oriented. Two of those five Special Forces groups, the 3rd and 7th, are stationed at Fort Bragg. The 7th, however, is slated to relocate to Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., in 2011 as a result of Base Realignment and Closure. USASFC's unconventional warfare capabilities provide a viable military option for a variety of operational taskings, making it the U.S. military's leading unconventional warfare force.

The 12-man, Operational Detachment Alpha or "A-Team" is the heart and soul of SF operations. In high demand for their adaptability, cultural acumen, language and specialty skills, Special Forces Soldiers take great pride in their official motto "De Oppresso Liber," Latin phrase meaning, "To Liberate the Oppressed." This refers to the purpose of their core, unconventional warfare mission: To liberate oppressed peoples from hostile occupation or tyrannical regimes.



A Special Forces medic from 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) gives an Afghani boy a coloring book near Kandahar, Afghanistan. Photo by Steve Hebert.

Living the legacy

The 75th Ranger Regiment is the world's premier Special Operations light infantry force. They are masters

of commando-like operations, including seizing and securing key objectives, such as airfields and other direct action operations.

Rangers take great pride in a fighting legacy with roots back to the French and Indian Wars, when Rogers' Rangers fought on America's frontiers. Rangers fought throughout the European theater during World War II and conducted deep penetration attacks against the Japanese in the China-Burma-India Theater. Rangers have played a vital role in Korea, Vietnam, Grenada, Panama and Somalia. Throughout their long history, Rangers have thrived in tough environments and taking the fight to the enemy.

Ranger training, at night and in adverse conditions, encompasses arctic, jungle, desert and mountain operations, as well as amphibious instruction.



Rangers scatter across Fryar Drop Zone after jumping from C-130 Hercules and C-17 Globemaster III aircraft during a mass tactical airborne operation. Photo by Sgt. Tony Hawkins.

Plus or minus 30 seconds

The 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment is home to the world's best helicopter pilots and one of the most heavily committed SOF units in the U.S. military. Throughout its history, the "Night Stalkers" of the 160th SOAR have compiled an unparalleled track record of successfully inserting and exfiltrating Special Operations personnel. Special Operations Forces have come to rely

on the "plus or minus 30 seconds" guarantee of the 160th SOAR.

Tight-knit and proud, the members of this Army Special Operations unit live up to their motto: "Night Stalkers Never Quit."



An MH-6 "Little Bird" from the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne) carries Rangers for an assault on a mock village at Fort Bragg, N.C. Photo by Mike Bottoms.

Words conquer

The 4th Psychological Operations Group is the active Army's only psychological operations element. The 1,300-member Fort Bragg unit (slated to grow to about 2,300 troops by the year 2011) has six regionally aligned battalions that include cultural experts and linguists who understand political, ethnic and religious subtleties.

The 4th POG designs messages for foreign audiences using television, radio and print, as well as the Internet. PSYOP troops are at many overseas locations to assist U.S. and foreign governments, militaries and civilian populations. Their activities use nonviolent means in often violent environments. Persuading rather than compelling physically, they rely on logic and emotion to promote specific attitudes or behaviors favorable to U.S. objectives.



Soldiers from the 4th Psychological Group (Airborne), conduct a leaflet drop over a village in Iraq. Courtesy photo.



U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

Civil military bridge

The 95th Civil Affairs Brigade bridges the gap between civilian populations and the U.S. military to address conditions that promote instability and are exploited by extremists. Civil Affairs teams

deploy worldwide, building ties with the local residents, identifying civil vulnerabilities and finding creative solutions to problems. To accomplish the mission, the 95th CA Soldiers are language trained, culturally sensitive negotiators who understand the complicated web of relationships and can operate in remote and austere conditions.

From the Philippines to Pakistan, from Mali to Colombia, Afghanistan and Iraq, the Army's only active duty Civil Affairs brigade is engaged around the world in more than 20 countries at any given time. Alongside other Special Operations Forces and U.S. government agencies, the Soldiers of the 95th support combatant commanders and U.S. ambassadors through the Civil Military Support Element. Sometimes in a military uniform and other times with a beard, 95th CA Soldiers work closely at the local level with tribal elders, the regional level with governors and military leaders and at the national level with host nation officials.



A Civil Affairs veterinarian gives a shot to a cow during a joint Coalition forces and ANSF operation in Shinkay district, Zabul province, Afghanistan. Courtesy photo.

Assured support

This year saw Fort Bragg's Special Operations Support Brigade reflagged as the 528th Sustainment Brigade. As the Army's only airborne sustainment brigade, nearly a third of the 528th is deployed somewhere in the world on any given day, providing

critical sustainment support to Special Operations units. The 528th also has the Army's only air transport medical team designed to provide critical care aboard fixed-wing aircraft.

Whether at the top of a mountain or the edge of a map, the 528th Sustainment Brigade is likely there ensuring Special Operations units have what they need.



Soldiers from the 528th Sustainment Brigade (Airborne) unload a simulated casualty during a MEDEVAC field training exercise at Fort Bragg, N.C. Courtesy photo.

Statues, symbols pay tribute to Army Special Operations heritage

Many on Fort Bragg are familiar with the symbol of the airborne community — the World War II paratrooper statue known as "Iron Mike."

The Special Operations community also has several statuary tributes to its Soldiers at Fort Bragg. The Special Warfare Memorial Statue, commonly called the "Green Beret" statue and "Bronze Bruce," sits on the U.S. Army Special Operations Command Memorial Plaza. Originally conceived and intended to honor America's Special Forces Soldiers serving in Vietnam, it was the first Vietnam War monument erected in the United States. While continuing to represent Army Special Forces, the statue now represents all Army Special Operations Soldiers.

Created in 1968 by sculptor Donald De Lue and dedicated in 1969, the statue depicts a Vietnam-era Special Forces noncommissioned officer and represents his dual role as a peacekeeper and a warrior. In his right hand he holds his M-16 rifle at the ready, finger outside of the trigger guard, while offering an extended open hand to those in need. His boot atop a rock crushes the



The Special Forces Memorial Statue, "Bronze Bruce," stands watch over the USASOC Memorial Plaza outside the command's headquarters building at Fort Bragg. Originally built in 1969, the statue was moved to the plaza from the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School in 1994. He faces the USASOC Memorial Wall, which displays the names of more than 1,000 Army SOF heroes killed in action since the Vietnam War. Photo by Gillian Albro.

the 6th Ranger Battalion in the Pacific during World War II. After the war, he had a short break in service before being recalled to active duty to serve in several

head of a serpent representing tyranny and oppression, illustrative of Special Forces' motto "De Oppresso Liber," Latin for "to liberate the oppressed."

There are two other Fort Bragg statues memorializing Special Operations history. These two memorials, both

cast in bronze, preserve the memory of two Special Forces' trailblazing leaders who continue to serve as role models for current Special Operations Soldiers.

The Col. Arthur D. "Bull" Simons statue was dedicated in 1999. It is the centerpiece of the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare plaza where graduates of the Special Forces Qualification Course don their green berets for the first time.

Simons served as a company commander of

Special Operations assignments. Some of his assignments included deputy commander and chief of staff of the U.S. Army Special Warfare Center, commander of a Mobile Training Team in Laos from 1961 to 1962, and the first commander of the 8th Special Forces Group. Simons is best remembered as the commander of

Operation Ivory Coast, or the Son Tay prison raid, to free American prisoners of war in North Vietnam.

The other statue is dedicated to Maj. Richard "Dick" Meadows.

After serving as a combat

infantryman in Korea, he joined Special Forces in 1953. Meadows was a highly respected team leader in the Military Assistance Command Vietnam Studies and Observation Group and is also known for his planning and leadership during the Son Tay raid.

Meadows was a key member in Operation Eagle Claw, better known as the Iran hostage rescue mission, which ultimately led to the establishment of today's Special Operations Forces. His statue stands on the east side of the USASOC parade field at Fort Bragg.

The U.S. Army's Institute of Heraldry Web site is a great resource for learning more about the symbols and meaning of military patches and insignias. Local military museums offer a unique insight into military



The Col. Arthur D. "Bull" Simons statue was dedicated in 1999. It is the centerpiece of the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare plaza. Photo by Mike Bottoms.



The Maj. Richard "Dick" Meadows statue. Meadows was a highly respected team leader in the Military Assistance Command Vietnam Studies and Observation Group and is also known for his planning and leadership during the Son Tay raid. Photo by Gillian Albro.



U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

history about Army Special Operations units.

The U.S. Army Special Operations Command Memorial Plaza is surrounded on all sides by decades of rich Special Operations history.

On the south end of the plaza, standing 22-feet tall and overlooking Meadows Field, the Special Forces Memorial Statue, “Bronze Bruce,” stands vigilant guard, just like the Green Berets he was sculpted to honor. Even though the statue is now the centerpiece of the Memorial Plaza, it has not always been his home.

After five years of construction, at a cost of \$100,000, the memorial statue was originally placed at the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School’s Memorial Plaza in 1969. Designed and handcrafted by famed American sculptor, Donald De

Lue, the memorial statue was cast in Italy and is made of golden bronze.

Dedicated as the first Vietnam War memorial in the United States, SF Soldiers from all over the world donated money for its production. Several notable celebrities such as John Wayne and Barry Sadler, the author of the song “The Ballad of the Green Beret,” both of whom are noted for their support of Army Special Forces Operators, also contributed large sums of money.

Placed inside the memorial is a time capsule containing a Vietnam-era Special Forces uniform, a Green Beret, a bust of President John F. Kennedy and a copy of the speech he gave authorizing the wear of the Green Beret by Special Forces.

This powerful image of one of the nation’s most legendary fighting forces portrays a sergeant first class wearing the jungle fatigues of a Vietnam-era warrior. Held in his right hand is an M-16, one of the tools of his



Family and friends of 36 fallen U.S. Army Special Operations Soldiers gather at the USASOC Memorial Wall to view the nameplates of their loved ones unveiled during a Soldier Memorial Ceremony hosted at Fort Bragg, N.C., May 28, 2009. Photo by Trish Harris.

trade. With his finger outside the trigger well, he stands alert to any threat. Crushed beneath his left foot, a snake symbolizes the threat and dangers in the world that will instantly bring him to action. Even amid the hazards of his profession, he offers an outstretched and helping hand to the unseen oppressed of the world.

Originally, the memorial was designed with the Special Forces Soldier's hand reaching out to children in need. While he is fully capable of bringing violence to the enemies of the nation, he is also fully willing and able to help those in need.

On Dec. 9, 1994, the memorial statue with the undisturbed time capsule was moved from its original location at USAJFKSWCS to the Memorial Plaza at the newly built USASOC headquarters. A ceremony dedicating the plaza was presided over by then-USASOC commanding general, now-retired Lt. Gen. James Scott.

Continuing north across the plaza, memorial stones represent some of the most elite units Army Special Operations have produced. Initially there were only 11 of these stones in honor of SOF units from World War II to present. The number of stones has since grown to 24. From legendary units such as the Office of Strategic Services' Jedburgh Teams and Merrill's Marauders, to the present day 75th Ranger Regiment and 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, the stones represent the progression of Army Special Operations from its infancy into the mature, elite force it has become.

While Army Special Operations Forces have developed into one of the most premiere fighting forces in the world, they could not have gotten there without the selfless service and sacrifices of many along the way. At the north end of the Memorial Plaza, resting below the ever-waving colors of the nation's flag, stands the USASOC Memorial Wall of Honor.

In 1995, a year after the plaza was dedicated, the Memorial Wall was unveiled. Upon it were the names of 804 Special Operations Soldiers who were killed in the Vietnam War. Of those names, 20 were Medal of Honor recipients, 108 received the Distinguished Service Cross or Distinguished Flying Cross. A combined 882 Silver Stars and 2,688 Purple Hearts were also awarded.

In the years since the wall's dedication, more names have been added to remember those lost from the



A family member creates an etching of the nameplate of a loved one on the USASOC Memorial Plaza Wall during a Soldier Memorial Ceremony hosted at Fort Bragg, N.C., on May 28, 2009. Photo by Trish Harris.

Vietnam War to present day.

Each Memorial Day, USASOC conducts a ceremony adding the names of those comrades lost in the previous year. Currently, the wall honors the names of more than 1,000 American heroes who gave their last full measure of devotion.

“As exemplary free men and volunteers, they served within our nation’s most elite formations, foremost in the ranks, specifically to protect that which they love, but also to extend the same freedom and choice to oppressed peoples in faraway lands,” said Lt. Gen. John Mulholland Jr., USASOC commanding general, at this year’s memorial ceremony.

In tribute to those brave SOF Soldiers lost, the Memorial Wall is being redesigned and is scheduled to be unveiled and rededicated during next year’s memorial ceremony. The new wall will continue the legacy of its predecessor, indelibly scribing the names and memories of those fallen Army SOF heroes.

Mulholland said the reason the wall will soon undergo this transformation is “to ensure that the fallen Soldiers of the world’s finest fighting force are remembered and recognized in a manner as best possibly befits their sacrifice.”

Special Operations successes found through lineage

Like many other military organizations, the rich



U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



First Special Services Force



Alamo Scouts



Office of Strategic Services



U.S. Army Special Forces Command (Airborne)

history of Army Special Operations is communicated through the symbolism of its unit insignias. Many of these units trace their heritage back to World War II and can be considered some of the most unique and specialized elements of any fighting force in the world. Army Special Operations Forces have developed into an integral part of the U.S. Army over the past six decades.

The youngest of all ARSOF elements is the U.S. Army Special Operations Command headquarters itself.

Officially forming in December 1989, the command adopted the insignia of a red spearhead with a black Fairbairn-Sykes dagger in the middle. The red spearhead is a tribute to the 1st Special Service Force, also known as “The Devil’s Brigade,” which was a joint American-Canadian commando unit operating in Italy and southern France during World War II. The unsheathed dagger has been a symbol of Army Special Operations since its inception, and it symbolizes the preparedness to conduct special missions at a moment’s notice. The Fairbairn-Sykes dagger was originally used by the Office of Strategic Services, a forerunner to Army Special Forces, and a modified version, the V-42

stiletto, was adopted by the FSSF. Surrounding the spearhead are gold wings representing ARSOF airborne and aviation missions, which are raised to show combat readiness. Below the wings, the USASOC motto reads, “Sine Pari,” Latin for “Without Equal.”

Army Special Forces is one of the oldest elements of ARSOF, drawing its origins from the 1st Special Service

Force. The current SF insignia, which was worn by the FSSF, is of a V-42 stiletto used by the unit and crossed by two silver arrows. The crossed arrows were originally worn by the U.S. Army Indian Scouts in the 1800s, denoting the uniqueness of their special missions. Below the dagger is the SF motto “De Oppresso Liber,” or “To Liberate the Oppressed.” Although Army Special Forces finds its roots in the FSSF and OSS, the first modern Special Forces unit, the 10th Special Forces Group, was activated in 1952 and commanded by a former OSS officer, Col. Aaron Bank. This elite unit was comprised of veterans from the Devil’s Brigade, OSS and other Parachute Infantry and guerrilla units from World War II.

Although the 75th Ranger Regiment did not officially stand up until 1986, it traces its direct lineage to the 75th Ranger Infantry Regiment formed during the Vietnam War. However, the Ranger heritage goes much further back, as early as the French and Indian War. Rogers’ Rangers was a company of woodsmen warriors attached to the British Army during that time. Francis Marion, known as “The Swamp Fox,” is also credited in the lineage of the Rangers for his irregular methods of warfare during the Revolutionary War. The modern Ranger insignia is a shield of blue, white, red and green, representing four of the original six teams of the 5307th Composite Unit, otherwise known as Merrill’s Marauders, a U.S. Army long-range penetration force that operated in Southeast Asia during World War II. On the shield is a sun, symbolizing the unit’s close work with Chinese forces during the Burma Campaign. A white star represents Burma, and a lightning bolt is symbolic of the unit’s quick-strike characteristic behind enemy lines.

Army Special Operations would not be complete without the men and women who support the units at the tip of the spear. The latest change to the USASOC family is the 528th Sustainment Brigade, which was officially redesignated from the Sustainment Brigade in December 2008. Along with the new name, the unit received a new insignia – a golden shield with the unit’s motto, “We Support to the Utmost.” The unit traces its heritage back to the 528th Support Battalion, which supported Special Operations during World War II. At the top of the insignia is a blue fleur-de-lis resting on two green mountains, representing France. Below are two red arrowheads rising out of water, symbolizing the unit’s two assault landings at Sicily and in southern France.

Another fairly young component of ARSOF is the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, the Night Stalkers, which is slightly older than USASOC. After the tragic events of Operation Eagle Claw in the Iranian hostage rescue attempt of 1980, select units from the 101st Airborne Division were chosen for intensive aviation training. This unit resulted in Task Force 160, to which the current Night Stalkers directly trace their lineage. The insignia of the 160th SOAR is a blue shield with a silver-winged centaur holding an upraised sword, prepared to strike. A golden moon is above the centaur's head, symbolizing the unit's nighttime operations. Below the centaur is the unit's nickname, Night Stalkers.

The two remaining Special Operations units, the 95th Civil Affairs Brigade and the 4th Psychological Operations Group, began to gain increasing importance during the Korean War. The 95th CA Brigade's insignia has a purple and golden globe resting on a white scroll with a representation of a golden Korean gate in the middle, signifying the unit's three campaign awards for Korea. The globe and scroll, both containing the purple and white colors of CA, are symbolic of the unit's worldwide responsibilities and civil and military laws. A red flash goes through the globe, denoting keenness in providing guidance and swift, courageous action. Bordering the insignia is the organization's motto, "Advise, Support, Stabilize."

The 4th POG, which traces its lineage back to the loudspeaker and leaflet companies of the Korean War, was utilized greatly in the Vietnam War. The golden color of the bamboo leaves, as well as the red color of the insignia are from the Vietnam flag and commemorate the group's service in Vietnam. Three vertical stripes of gray, white and black represent the

different types of Psychological Operations the group is responsible for. The three lightning bolts signify the three types of media the organization uses to disseminate their products – audio, visual and face-to-face. At the bottom of the insignia is the Latin phrase, "Verbum Vincet," or "Words Conquer."

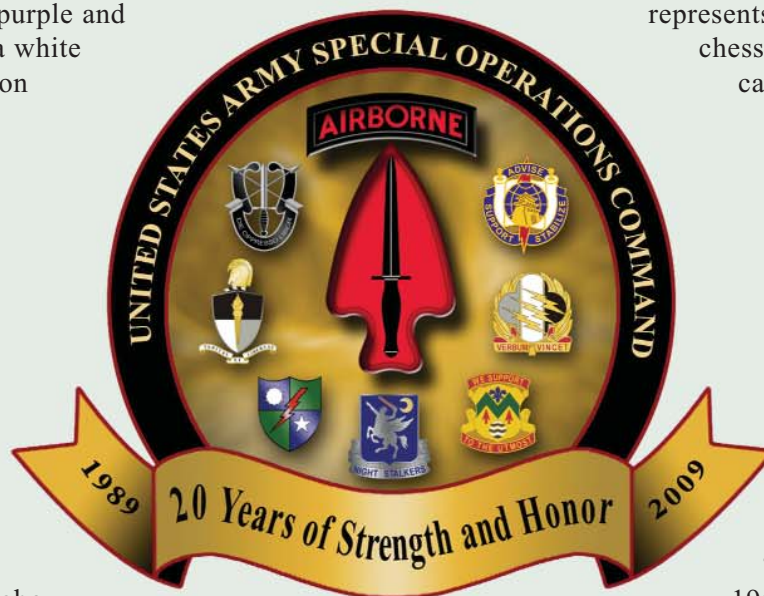
Without the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, many of the previous units would not have the expertly trained and skilled Soldiers to fulfill their missions. Although it has gone through several name changes, the school has been operating since 1952, when it was known as the Psychological Warfare School. In 1957 it became the U.S. Army Special Warfare School, to which the torch placed in the middle of the current school's insignia pays tribute. The torch represents light, learning, liberty and truth. The Trojan horse on the insignia is a universal symbol of subversive activity, though it also

represents the knight in a game of chess, which is the only piece capable of moving indirectly and striking an enemy behind its own lines. The three colors of the shield, like the 4th POG, are gray, white and black, representing the various natures of Special Operations missions. Below the shield is the school's motto, "Veritas et Libertas," Latin for

"Truth and Freedom." In 1963, the school was renamed in honor of the late President

John F. Kennedy, whose support of ARSOF was well known throughout the Special Operations community. It was Kennedy who authorized Special Forces Soldiers to wear the Green Beret in 1961.

Though many may just see a unit patch or insignia as a way of identifying where a Soldier is serving, the insignias of Army Special Operations serve as a permanent reminder of where the units have been and their capabilities for the future.





Special Forces Medal of Honor recipient dies

By *USASOC Public Affairs*

Retired Army Col. Robert L. Howard, a Medal of Honor recipient, U.S. Army Ranger and Special Forces veteran, died at the age of 70, Dec. 23 at his residence in San Antonio, Texas.

Howard, born July 11, 1939, in Opelika, Ala., was known throughout the Army and the military's Special Operations community for his courage and leadership in combat. He entered the service July 20, 1956, and was medically retired Sept. 30, 1992. He died of natural causes.

Howard received the Medal of Honor for actions in Vietnam Dec. 30, 1968. He was nominated three times for the award in 13 months; the first was downgraded to the Distinguished Service Cross, and the last was downgraded to a Silver Star. All three came while he served as a noncommissioned officer in the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam – Studies and Observations Group.

He received a direct commission from master sergeant to first lieutenant in December 1969 and went on to command several units throughout his career.

His military assignments include time with the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions; 2nd Ranger Battalion; 3rd, 5th and 6th Special Forces Groups; 5th Infantry Division; 7th Corps and XVIII Airborne Corps.

Howard at one point participated in two movies concerning airborne and Special Operations missions, both featuring John Wayne. He made a parachute jump on the filming of "The Longest Day" and was an airborne instructor in "The Green Berets."

His awards and decorations include the Medal of Honor; Distinguished Service Cross; Silver Star; Defense Superior Service Medal; Legion of Merit (three awards); Bronze Star for Valor (three awards); Purple Heart (eight awards); Meritorious Service Medal (two awards); Air Medal for Valor (two awards); Joint Service Commendation Medal; Army Commendation Medal for Valor (three awards); Joint Service Achievement Medal; Army Good Conduct Medal (four awards); National Defense Service Medal; Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal; Vietnam



Col. Robert L. Howard

Service Medal; Armed Forces Reserve Medal; NCO Professional Development Ribbon; Army Service Ribbon; Overseas Service Ribbon; Vietnamese Gallantry Cross with Gold, Silver and Bronze Stars; and the Vietnam Wound Medal.

He was also authorized to wear the Army Presidential Unit Citation; Navy Valorous Unit Citation; Army Meritorious Unit Citation; Vietnamese Gallantry Unit Citation with Palm; Vietnam Armed Forces Honor Medal (two awards); Vietnam Civil Action Medal (two awards); Republic of Korea Order of National Security Merit (Samil Medal); Combat Infantryman's Badge; Expert Infantryman's Badge; Army Aircrew Badge; Master Parachutist Badge; Pathfinder Badge; Air Assault Badge; Vietnamese Ranger Badge; Special Forces Tab and Army Ranger Tab.



Then Sgt. 1st Class Robert Howard carries a North Vietnamese Army prisoner. Photo courtesy of Jim Shorten.



Capt. Robert Howard is awarded the Medal of Honor by President Richard Nixon at the White House March 2, 1971 Photo courtesy of Wesley Alexander.



Sgt. 1st Class Robert Howard (front left) in Vietnam while assigned to the Military Assistance Command- Studies and Observations Group. - MACVSOG. Photo courtesy of John Plaster.



Maj. Robert Howard (right) at Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall dedication. Photo courtesy of John Plaster.

Medal of Honor citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. 1st Lt. Howard (then Sfc.), distinguished himself while serving as platoon sergeant of an American-Vietnamese platoon which was on a mission to rescue a missing American soldier in enemy controlled territory in the Republic of Vietnam. The platoon had left its helicopter landing zone and was moving out on its mission when it was attacked by an estimated 2-company force. During the initial engagement, 1st Lt. Howard was wounded and his weapon destroyed by a grenade explosion. 1st Lt. Howard saw his platoon leader had been wounded seriously and was exposed to fire. Although unable to walk, and weaponless, 1st Lt. Howard unhesitatingly crawled through a hail of fire to retrieve his wounded leader. As 1st Lt. Howard was administering first aid and removing the officer's equipment, an enemy bullet struck 1 of the ammunition pouches on the lieutenant's belt, detonating several magazines of ammunition. 1st Lt. Howard momentarily sought cover and then realizing that he must rejoin the platoon, which had been disorganized by the enemy attack, he again began dragging the seriously wounded officer toward the platoon area. Through his outstanding example of indomitable courage and bravery, 1st Lt. Howard was able to rally the platoon into an organized defense force. With complete disregard for his safety, 1st Lt. Howard crawled from position to position, administering first aid to the wounded, giving encouragement to the defenders and directing their fire on the encircling enemy. For 3 1/2 hours 1st Lt. Howard's small force and supporting aircraft successfully repulsed enemy attacks and finally were in sufficient control to permit the landing of rescue helicopters. 1st Lt. Howard personally supervised the loading of his men and did not leave the bullet-swept landing zone until all were aboard safely. 1st Lt. Howard's gallantry in action, his complete devotion to the welfare of his men at the risk of his life were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit on himself, his unit, and the U.S. Army.



U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

Two 3rd Special Forces Group Soldiers receive Silver Stars

*By Cpl. Katryn McCalment
50th Public Affairs Detachment*

Hundreds of Soldiers from the 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne) gathered recently to recognize the valor and sacrifice of 40 of their own during a valor award ceremony in the John F. Kennedy Auditorium.

Staff Sgt. Linsey Clarke, who serves as a medical sergeant for Operational Detachment-Alpha 3123, Company B, 1st Battalion, 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne), and Master Sgt. Anthony Siriwardene, an operations sergeant of Operational Detachment Alpha 3236, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 3rd SFG, were each awarded the Silver Star for acts of valor during battles in Afghanistan.

The crowd of Soldiers, family members and friends stood as Lt. Gen. John Mulholland Jr., commander of the U.S. Army Special Operations Command, pinned the medals on the Soldiers' uniforms.

"Strength and honor was the motto given to Task Force Dagger," said Mulholland. "Strength and honor is exactly what you heard exemplified here today in the combat actions of our Silver Star recipients."

A daily patrol

The sky was clear. The air had a bite to it, but for Afghanistan it was a beautiful day, said Clarke.

It was Feb. 20, 2009. Clarke was the driver of one of four vehicles conducting a joint operations patrol with members of the Afghan National Army, Afghan National Police and Czech Special Operations Forces in Khordi, a village in southern Afghanistan.

In unison, the third vehicle in the convoy was struck by an improvised explosive device, and the lead vehicle was engaged by rocket-propelled grenades. Each vehicle was taking small-arms fire from both the east and west as the patrol was being ambushed.

Clarke immediately backed up his vehicle to assist those who had been struck by the roadside bomb. He dismounted and ran through a volley of fire to discover three of the men inside had been killed instantly. The two



Lt. Gen. John Mulholland, commander of U.S. Army Special Operations Command, presents Staff Sgt. Linsey Clarke, a Special Forces medical sergeant, a Silver Star for valor for his actions during a battle in Afghanistan. USASOC courtesy photo.



Lt. Gen. John Mulholland, commander of U.S. Army Special Operations Command, presents Master Sgt. Anthony Siriwardene, an operations sergeant, a Silver Star for valor for his actions during a battle in Afghanistan. USASOC courtesy photo.

remaining teammates were alive, but both were badly wounded.

Clarke found Staff Sgt. Eric Englehardt first. Both his legs were broken, and he was bleeding heavily, so Clarke quickly and calmly applied a tourniquet to his right leg and dragged him from the burning vehicle. With no cover and enemy fire on both sides, Clarke returned to the destroyed vehicle and found Master Sgt. David Hurt. He again dragged his comrade to safety.

With the team's other medic now tending to the wounded, Clarke volunteered to stay in the firefight to secure the remains of the fallen Soldiers.

Today, even with a Silver Star pinned to his chest, Clarke still doesn't believe he is a hero.

"It's something any one of those guys would've done for me. There wasn't a second thought," he said.

Siriwardene directs the fight

In August, four years earlier, Siriwardene and his teammates battled for 56 hours through seven enemy engagements in Zabol province, Afghanistan.

Working alongside the Afghan National Army, Siriwardene's team came under heavy enemy fire while on patrol in the Buka Ghar Valley, an insurgent stronghold.

During the second engagement, Siriwardene repeatedly left the safety of his vehicle to reposition an element of ANA soldiers, said Capt. Blayne Smith, Siriwardene's team leader.

"The enemy forces would have taken advantage of the ANA element and would have destroyed their unit if Master Sergeant Siriwardene had not directed them in the right positions," said Smith.

As the battle raged on, the insurgents called for reinforcements and regrouped into better-trained, stronger units in order to attack again.

The sixth engagement found the team taking extraordinary volumes of machine-gun fire and a vicious onslaught of rocket-propelled grenades. Siriwardene again risked his life by sprinting to the last truck that was taking the brunt of the attack.

As the turret burst into flames, Siriwardene pulled the gunner to safety, and then using the cover of a vehicle,



Master Sgt. Anthony Siriwardene and Staff Sgt. Linsey Clarke sit in the John F. Kennedy auditorium, Fort Bragg, N.C., after receiving their Silver Stars. USASOC courtesy photo.

began to gather up ANA soldiers who had been pinned down by enemy fire.

The following morning, Siriwardene's team was joined by a Quick Reaction Force element, and after the fiercest of the seven battles, was able to crush the enemy forces.

"We had pinpointed and fixed the enemy," said Siriwardene. "Now, we basically controlled the tempo of the battle."

When the fighting was over, the team was able to confirm 65 enemy kills.

Like Clarke, Siriwardene doesn't believe he did anything to deserve recognition over his teammates.

"The way the guys in the detachment performed – it was amazing," he said. "This is what we do."

These awards show the level of dedication these Soldiers have to the team and to the mission, said Capt. Adam Paxton, Clarke's team leader.

"It's not without sacrifice. It's not without loss. But, victory is the end state achieved by these men," said Mulholland.

Along with the two Silver Stars, Mulholland presented nine Bronze Stars with valor devices, six Purple Hearts, and 25 Army Commendation Medals with valor devices, all to brave 3rd Special Forces Group Soldiers.





U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

75th Ranger receives Silver Star for combat actions

By Tracy Bailey

75th Ranger Regiment Public Affairs

A squad leader with the 75th Ranger Regiment was awarded the Silver Star for risking his life to save two fellow Rangers in Afghanistan.

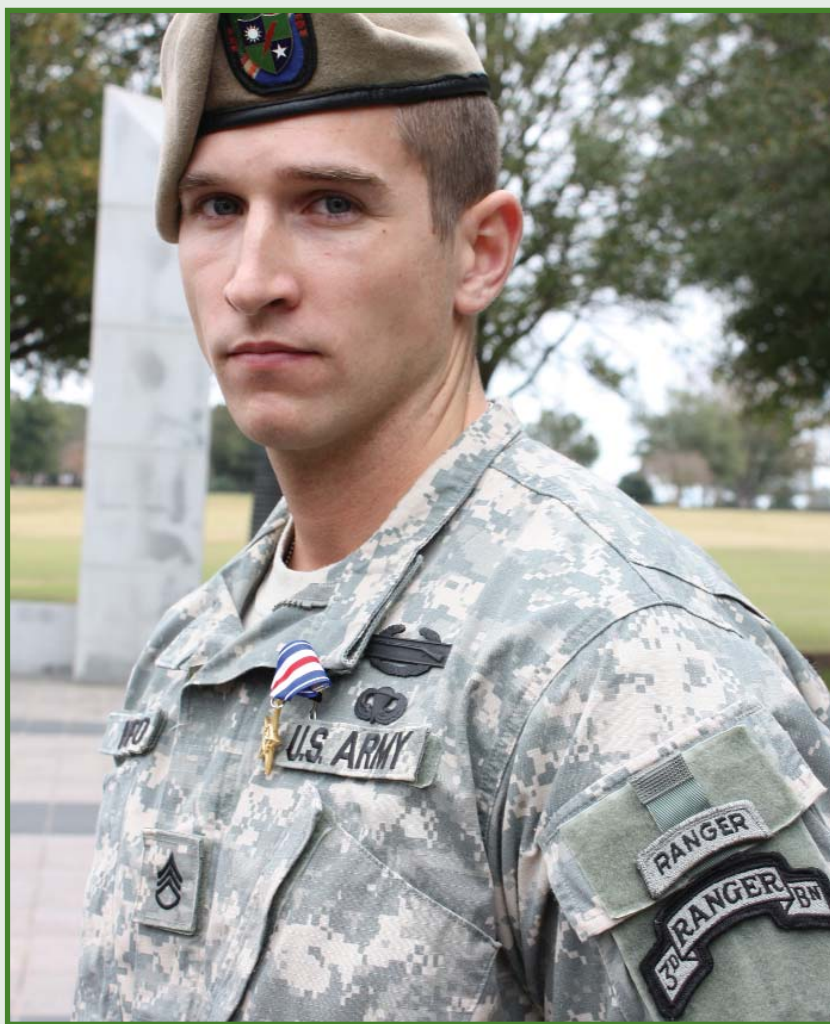
“Any Ranger would have done the same thing,” said Staff Sgt Michael Norton of Alpha Company, 3rd Battalion, of the 75th Ranger Regiment. “The Ranger Creed says, ‘I will never leave a fallen comrade.’ There was no moment of thinking about what to do. I had to get my brothers, and the most important thing in my mind was how hurt they were.”

Norton led his squad on an objective, Aug. 4 through Aug. 5, to raid an enemy combatant’s headquarters camp in the mountains of northwestern Khowst province, Afghanistan.

While moving to the objective, Norton and one of his team leaders were alerted to possible enemy combatants along the route and moved forward to assess the situation. As Norton and his team leader were attempting to identify the possible enemy in the valley, a seven-to nine-man enemy element initiated a complex, near ambush on Norton’s squad from the high ground with rocket-propelled grenades and small-arms fire from a position of 25 meters to the squad’s front.

“The fire came from our twelve o’clock and then maybe a couple of seconds later from our right and left,” Norton said.

Behind the first enemy rocket-propelled grenade team, a medium machine gun on elevated ground to the northwest engaged them with highly effective fire. Two



Staff Sgt. Michael Norton, assigned to 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, received the Silver Star for bravery for his action in a battle in the northwestern Khowst province, Afghanistan. USASOC courtesy photo.

more enemy combatants on the slope of the valley to the west engaged the Ranger squad with an AK-47 and rocket-propelled grenades along the long axis of their formation, while another group of enemy fighters on

elevated terrain to the east raked them with small-arms fire from the rear of the Ranger squad formation.

The multiple enemy positions had effectively enveloped Norton's squad from multiple directions at a distance of 25 to 50 meters, leaving Norton and his element pinned to the floor of the valley by the intense and accurate small-arms fire.

The valley left no room for maneuver; Norton, his squad and the machine-gun team element behind them immediately returned fire, but they were unable to gain fire superiority over the well-established enemy.

After the second rocket-propelled grenades knocked two of his Rangers temporarily unconscious and blasted the rest of his squad with shrapnel and debris, and realizing, his element could not gain fire superiority, Norton shouted for his squad to break contact.

When Norton realized that two Rangers had not gotten up and were still exposed to the heavy volume of enemy fire from the high ground to the east and west, and with complete disregard for his own safety, Norton turned around and with marked distinction, purposefully charged back into the interlocking fire of the enemy ambush kill zone in order to recover his downed Rangers.

"The example of personal courage that Staff Sergeant Norton showed to get his men out of the kill zone is a testament to his character," said Maj. Keith Carter, A Company commander.

"NCOs such as Staff Sergeant Norton are the reason I wanted to serve in the 75th Ranger Regiment, and it is an honor to lead them."

Without hesitation, Norton dove down into the midst of enemy fire with his unconscious comrades, uncertain of their status.

"There was nothing fancy going on in my head besides hoping they weren't dead," said Norton.

While the rest of the element attempted to suppress

the enemy, and lying next to the Rangers, Norton "started shaking and yelling as quietly as I could."

After reviving his Rangers, Norton led them back to cover through the hail of direct fire and rocket-propelled grenade strikes, saving their lives and bringing his entire squad out of the enemy onslaught intact.



"I'm proud of the actions of my squad, because we continued the mission after that," said Norton. "It was just two minutes out of our overall mission."

As his platoon fought off the enemy ambush with direct fire, mortars and close air support, Norton quickly assessed his casualties and

reorganized his squad to return to the fight.

Norton continued leading his squad in the follow-on assaults through two more direct-fire contacts, killing two enemy combatants.

"We receive a lot of great training here at Third Ranger Battalion, and I was just acting on instinct," said Norton.

The training conducted by Rangers means everything on the battlefield.

"The goal of the company and battalion is to create the most realistic scenarios possible while minimizing risk," said Carter. "We constantly integrate new enemy tactics from overseas into our training so that we are ready in any situation."

The overall assault force killed 20 enemy fighters, destroyed two enemy anti-aircraft guns and several other

weapons, explosives and military supplies on the objective, resulting in the disruption of a major enemy headquarters and encampment.

Norton joined the Army from his hometown of Pensacola, Fla., June 2004, after graduating from West Highland Christian Academy and has deployed six times in support of operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom. He is the son of Jimmy and Deborah Norton of Holly, Mich.

"NCOs such as Staff Sgt. Norton are the reason I wanted to serve in the 75th Ranger Regiment, and it is an honor to lead them."

*— Maj. Keith Carter,
Norton's company
commander*



NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND

Aquatics enhancement program offered to Fleet Sailors

*Story and photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Joseph Clark
Naval Special Warfare Group 2 Public Affairs*

Members of the East Coast Naval Special Warfare Motivating Team recently established an Aquatics Outreach Program as part of the Sea Air Land (SEAL) and Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen (SWCC) Fleet Transition Program for candidates pursuing careers in military Special Operations.

The NSW aquatics program is open to Fleet Sailors who aspire to become SEAL or SWCC Operators, with the intent on preparing candidates for the intense water skills and rigorous demands required for Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL training and Basic Crewman Training.

“Swimming and aquatics-based evolutions have been the Achilles’ heel for most candidates who recede from BUD/S,” said retired SEAL Capt. Dave Morrison, an aquatics instructor and SEAL motivator based out of Joint Expeditionary Base, Little Creek, Va. “Our program was designed to address this challenge by providing the candidates with a familiarity and a level of comfort in the water, as well as instruction on technique and physical conditioning that were not available to these Sailors before we started this program.”

Morrison, who completed a tour as a BUD/S instructor as an active duty SEAL, said the aquatics program will open doors for candidates who are otherwise qualified for careers as SEALs and SWCCs, but lack water-based skills.

“The system is tried and true,” said Morrison. “The goal has never been to lower the standards for candidates at BUD/S and BCT, but rather to increase the candidate’s proficiency and to prepare them mentally and physically for the challenges of this very difficult training.”

The aquatics program aims extend beyond preparation for the initial entry level SEAL/SWCC training, coordinators said. These skill sets are essential for proficiency in the operational environment that SEAL and SWCC personnel work in.

“NSW constantly keeps one foot in the water,” Morrison said. “These operations are what define our community, and the rigors of BUD/S and BCT are a reflection of this



Petty Officer 2nd Class Wilmot Lloyd rests after swimming in preparation for an upcoming Physical Screening Test as part of the Naval Special Warfare Aquatics Outreach Program at Joint Expeditionary Base, Little Creek, Va.

concentration. This is also why many shy away from the community or are unable to make it through the training.”

Although the NSW community will continue to maintain its demanding environment, more candidates may find they are up to the challenge as a result of the Aquatics Outreach Program, according to Morrison.

“We take candidates from ground zero and prepare them for the challenges,” Morrison said. “This program introduces a valuable skill set to those who are uncomfortable or who have low proficiency in the water. We are able, as a community, to incorporate candidates from a multitude of backgrounds, even if they have limited initial exposure to the water-based skills they will need to succeed.”

Petty Officer 2nd Class Wilmot Lloyd, who has been participating in the program for four months, said that this program is the preparation he needs to accomplish his goal of becoming a Navy SEAL.

“I wanted to be a SEAL since boot camp, but I never attempted BUD/S because I knew there was a lot of concentration on swimming and operating in the water,” Lloyd said.

“Willy is an ideal candidate for this program,” Morrison said, speaking about Lloyd. “Before he joined the program, he basically had no exposure to the water. The first time I watched him swim, he literally sank to the bottom. He is now completing the entire swim portion, and his times are improving each week.”

SWCCs share boarding tactics

*Story and photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Tim Miller
Naval Special Warfare Group 4 Public Affairs*

U.S. Navy Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen from Special Boat Team 20 gave Sailors from USS Peleliu (LHA5) and USS Dubuque (LPD 8) a three-week training course focusing on visit, board, search and seizure (VBSS) tactics Nov. 2 through Nov. 24 on Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek, Va.

Visit, Board, Search and Seizure is the term for maritime boarding actions designed to capture enemy vessels for the purpose of combating terrorism and piracy and to conduct customs, safety and other inspections.

This particular course, facilitated by the Special Warfare Boat Operators, consisted of basic small boat navigation, basic engineering and basic craft boarding.

“Our focus during this training is to give these Sailors the opportunity to learn a skill set they can take back to their individual commands, and then teach to other Sailors,” said Chief Petty Officer (SWCC) Ben Westmoreland, a Rigid-hull Inflatable Boat detachment commander at SBT 20.

“With the opportunity for these Sailors to execute a modified level three VBSS, we are contributing to the mission of the conventional Navy to maintain, train and equip combat-ready Naval forces capable of winning wars, deterring aggression and maintaining freedom of the seas,” said Senior Chief Petty Officer (SWCC) Dave McClain, training department leading chief petty officer for SBT 20. VBSS threat levels one and two are low threat, compliant situations, while a VBSS level three involves noncompliance after an official request to inspect a ship in sovereign waters. Level four would involve overt armed resistance and will continue to be a mission set solely belonging to Special Operations.

“It’s physically demanding. You’re out there on the water and at times these boats get airborne, they crash down, you really take a beating,” said Lt. j.g. Danny Rigdon, a boarding officer for USS Peleliu. “I’m excited to take this back to the Fleet. We’re learning from the best subject matter experts in the field.”

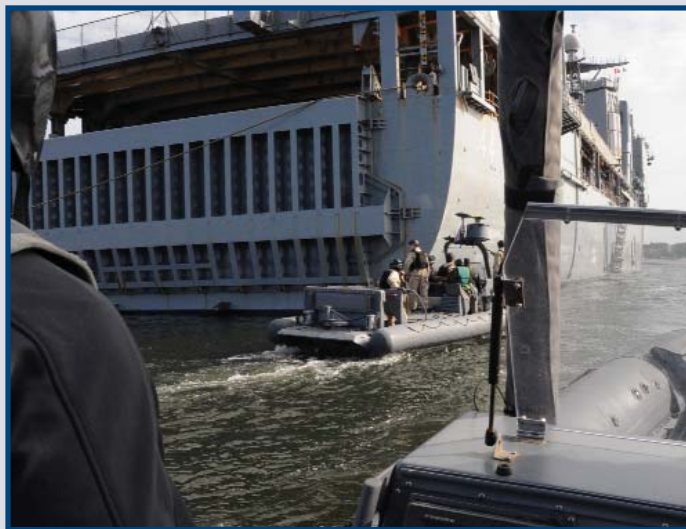
VBSS is conducted by modern military and police forces globally. These mission sets played an important

role in the creation of Naval Special Warfare reducing drug smuggling through the Panama Canal in Operation Just Cause, stopping Iranian ships smuggling oil and laying mines during Operation Earnest Will, and stopping Iraqi craft smuggling oil and armament during Operation Desert Storm and in the years following during Operation Provide Comfort.

The ability to perform VBSS helps set the conditions for security and stability in the maritime environment, as well as complementing the counterterrorism and security efforts of regional nations. These operations seek to disrupt violent extremists’ use of the maritime environment as a venue for attack or to transport personnel, weapons or other material.

Naval Special Warfare Forces conducted more than 120 noncompliant boardings in 2001, just in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility.

These numbers continued to rise until 2004 when the conventional Navy began taking on more of these missions without Special Operations Forces help. This training, a proof of concept for preparing conventional Navy VBSS teams for more advanced boardings, is another step in the evolution of this mission set.



Sailors from USS Peleliu (LHA 5) and USS Dubuque (LPD 8) receive training from Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen during a three-week training course focusing on visit, board, search and seizure tactics on Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek, Va.



Airmen receive Sijan Award

By Master Sgt. Russell P. Petcoff
Secretary of the Air Force Public Affairs

Air Force Chief of Staff, Gen. Norton Schwartz recently honored the service's four Capt. Lance P. Sijan Award recipients in a ceremony in the Pentagon's Hall of Heroes.

The Sijan Award annually recognizes Airmen who demonstrate outstanding leadership abilities, and this year's recipients are Maj. James Hughes Jr. from Bolling Air Force Base, Washington D.C.; Capt. Thomas Eckel of Eglin Air Force Base, Fla.; Chief Master Sgt. Michael Bobbitt from Yokota Air Base, Japan; and Tech. Sgt. Scott Woodring of Robins Air Force Base, Ga.

"We are here to celebrate the legacy of Lance P. Sijan, an epic name, a legendary figure and a veritable giant on the distinguished roll call of Air Force heroes," Schwartz said. "And, to recognize four well-deserving individuals who have demonstrated the highest qualities of leadership and exemplify our core values of integrity, service and excellence, just as Captain Sijan did in the most extraordinary way."

Honored guests to the ceremony were Jane Sijan and Janine Sijan Rozina, mother and sister of the late-Captain Sijan, respectively. Their presence was moving to the honorees.

"I found out this morning the Sijans were coming, and it has made this event even more exciting," Woodring said.

Though the award recognizes four Airmen, the honorees said earning the Sijan award wasn't an individual effort.

"This award isn't about me," Hughes said. "It's about the entire team of the 24th Special Tactics Squadron (from Pope Air Force Base, N.C.). I was just privileged to be a part of the organization and team. I stand here and represent them and the rest of the Special Tactics community."

He said he was "honored to be associated" with Capt. Sijan.

All the Airmen recognized the importance of family in their success, acknowledging their families for their years of support and sacrifices during their careers.

"Without the family a lot of this doesn't happen for us," Woodring explained. He noted support from his family "reaches pretty deep."

Hughes is currently a student at the National Defense



Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Norton Schwartz presents the Capt. Lance P. Sijan Air Force Leadership Award to Tech. Sgt. Scott Woodring. Photo by Michael Pausic.

Intelligence College pursuing a masters degree in strategic intelligence. The Sijan Award recognizes his role as director of operations at the 24th STS from July 1, 2007, to June 30, 2008.

Hughes led a unit spending more than 16,000 man-days in combat, according to his citation. His unit eliminated more than 1,140 militants with close-air support and saved the lives of 16 U.S. servicemembers.

Woodring was a Special Tactics Tactical Air Control Party member certified as a Joint Terminal Attack Controller assigned to the 17th Air Support Operations Squadron at Operational Location Alpha, Hunter Army Airfield, Ga., from July 1, 2007, to June 30, 2008. According to his citation, Woodring deployed to provide JTAC support to Army Ranger units in operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. In Iraq, his participation in 120 direct-action missions led to the capture or elimination of more than 75 terrorists, 35 of them deemed high value.

Woodring was critically wounded from direct enemy fire during his second deployment. However, he still continued to call in assault helicopters on enemy positions within 100 meters prior to being medically evacuated.

Named for the first U.S. Air Force Academy graduate to receive the Medal of Honor, the Sijan award was first presented in 1981. Capt. Sijan was shot down over North Vietnam Nov. 9, 1967, and evaded capture for 45 days. He later died while in a North Vietnamese prisoner-of-war camp and was posthumously presented the Medal of Honor for his heroism.

USO officials honor 5 Medal of Honor recipients, AFSOC Airman of Year

*Story and photo by Andrea Knudson
Secretary of the Air Force Public Affairs*

Officials of the Metropolitan New York USO held their 48th Annual Armed Forces Gala and Gold Medal Dinner and honored the only five living Air Force Medal of Honor recipients Dec. 9 in New York City.

The USO's Distinguished Service Award was presented to Col. Bernard Fisher, Col. James Fleming, Col. Joe Jackson and Col. Leo Thorsness.

Col. George Day was also honored, but was not on hand for the event. A video presentation was shown depicting the men's stories from the battlefield.

NBC's Brian Williams, who co-hosted the event with retired Army Col. Jack Jacobs, a Medal of Honor recipient for his actions in Vietnam, said of the five, "these are the best Americans there are."

The USO's Distinguished Service Award was also awarded to Army Gen. Raymond Odierno, the top U.S. commander in Iraq; network cable giant HBO for its outstanding military-themed programming; and Bruce Whitman, president and CEO of FlightSafety International, Inc., and co-chairman of the Medal of Honor Foundation.

Capt. Justin Conelli was named the USO Airman of the Year and received the George Van Cleave Leadership award. The award is presented to members of each of the armed services in recognition of distinguished service, accomplishments and demonstrated leadership while deployed overseas.

Capt. Conelli, assigned to Air Force Special Operations Command's 21st Special Tactics Squadron at Pope Air Force Base, N.C., was recognized for his skill, bravery and selfless service in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

The USO's Distinguished Service Award is USO's premiere award that recognizes exemplary leadership and service to the armed forces. The mission of the USO of Metropolitan New York is to positively contribute to the morale and personal

welfare of U.S. military personnel and their families who reside in, are stationed in, or are visiting the tri-state area. The organization helps channel the American public's desire to give back to those who serve the country into programs and services that enrich their lives.



Army Gen. Raymond Odierno presents the George Van Cleave Leadership award to Capt. Justin Conelli at the USO of Metropolitan New York's 48th Annual Armed Forces Gala and Gold Medal Dinner Dec. 9, 2009, in New York City. Odierno is the top U.S. commander in Iraq, and was awarded the USO's Distinguished Service Award. Conelli is assigned to Air Force Special Operations Command's 21st Special Tactics Squadron at Pope Air Force Base, N.C.



MARINE CORPS FORCES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

MARSOC has new commander

*Story and photos by Cpl. Richard Blumenstein
MARSOC Public Affairs*

Maj. Gen. Mastin Robeson relinquished command of U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command to Maj. Gen. Paul Lefebvre Nov. 20, during a change of command ceremony in front of the MARSOC headquarters building on Stone Bay at Camp Lejeune, N.C.

Robeson retired from the Marine Corps following the ceremony after 34 years of service. Robeson received his commission in December 1975.

During the ceremony, Adm. Eric T. Olson, commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, gave thanks to Robeson for his service and welcomed the incoming MARSOC commander, Lefebvre.

"This is an important occasion for many reasons. Today we recognize a great general of Marines, not only for his leadership over the past year and a half, but also for a lifetime of service to the Corps and to his country," Olson said. "We will usher in a new commander in whom I have the greatest confidence."

Robeson became the second commander of MARSOC July 25, 2008. Under his command, MARSOC has grown to about 2,200 Marines, Sailors and civilians and is now at more than 80 percent of its total authorized strength.

He deployed more than 900 Marines in direct support of Operation Enduring Freedom-Afghanistan, maintaining a constant MARSOC presence there. Those Marines include the first ever Marine-led Special Operations Task Force, which recently deployed.

Another 450 Marines have deployed to other parts of the globe conducting security cooperation activities and other joint training activities.

Other milestones include standing up the Marine Special Operations Regiment, which acts as a headquarters element for 1st, 2d and 3d Marine Special Operations Battalions, and the graduation of 50 Marines from the first ever MARSOC Individual Training Course, where they earned the title Marine Special Operator.

As a general officer, he served as the assistant division commander and commanding general of 2nd Marine Division. He has been the commanding general of the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa, 3rd and 4th

Marine Expeditionary Brigades and 3rd Marine Division. He also served as the deputy commanding general of III Marine Expeditionary Force, and the director of strategy, plans and assessment, CJ5, Multinational Force-Iraq.

His time in service includes deployments to Liberia, Somalia, Horn of Africa, southern Philippines, Iraq, and Afghanistan. He also served and deployed in support of Desert Storm.

Lefebvre is taking command of MARSOC after serving as the deputy commanding general of II MEF.

Lefebvre has also served as the commanding officer of the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit, deputy director for operations U.S. Pacific Command, deputy commanding general Multinational Corps-Iraq, director of the Marine Air Ground Task Force Staff Training Program, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, and commanding general of Marine Corps Recruit Depot/Eastern Recruiting Region, Parris Island, S.C.



Maj. Gen. Mastin Robeson (right) relinquished command of U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command to Maj. Gen. Paul Lefebvre during a change of command ceremony in front of the MARSOC headquarters building on Stone Bay at Camp Lejeune, N.C., Nov. 20. Lefebvre is taking command of MARSOC after serving as the deputy commanding general of II Marine Expeditionary Force.

MARSOC opens new headquarters

*Story and photo by Cpl. Richard Blumenstein
MARSOC Public Affairs*

High ranking U.S. Special Operations Command and Marine Corps personnel gathered alongside community leaders to commemorate the new U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command Headquarters building during a ribbon cutting ceremony Nov. 20, on Stone Bay at Camp Lejeune, N.C..

During the ceremony, Gen. James Amos, assistant commandant of the Marine Corps, was presented with a KA-BAR knife, and Adm. Eric T. Olson, commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, was presented with a Marine Raider Stiletto to cut the ribbon.

“What you see behind you is a truly powerful manifestation of what can happen when two organizations like the United States Special Operations Command and the United States Marine Corps combine resources, combine energy to contribute to the capabilities of a most important organization like the Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command with a most important

mission at this time in our history,” Olson said in reference to the new facility.

The facility cost more than \$51 million and took 500 personnel to build. The construction of the facility began in January 2007 and reached completion Sept. 6.

The facility’s construction was part of a \$259 million project meant to reach completion in 2010. The project is a long-term military construction plan to provide MARSOC with extensive, multi-faceted and functional compounds on Marine Corps Bases Camp Lejeune, N.C., and Camp Pendleton, Calif.

The new facilities consolidate Marines in MARSOC who previously were divided between 112 different facilities into 45. The facilities being constructed at Stone Bay include three barracks, 17 training facilities, 15 work facilities and 10 miscellaneous facilities.

Prior to the ribbon cutting, Maj. Gen. Mastin Robeson passed the reigns of command to Maj. Gen. Paul Lefebvre, making him the third commander of MARSOC.

Following the change of command, Robeson retired from the Marine Corps after 34 years of service.



Gen. James Amos, assistant commandant of the Marine Corps, (center right) and Adm. Eric T. Olson, commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, (center left) prepare to cut a ribbon during a ceremony to commemorate the new U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command Headquarters building Nov. 20, on Stone Bay at Camp Lejeune, N.C.

VIETNAM'S MOST SECRET SQUADRON



PROJECT DUCK HOOK

Vietnam

— International boundary



★ National capital

By retired Air Force Col. Bernard Moore II

Weaving its way through moonlit skies, passing low between jungle-covered mountain passes, the blacked-out and unmarked airplane steadily headed for its target—an isolated drop zone deep inside communist North Vietnam. Arriving over its objective, a small green light blinked inside the plane's darkened fuselage, and two Vietnamese secret agents plunged out into the humid night air, their static-line parachutes snapping open, easing their descent into the heartland of the enemy. Above them, the sound of the mysterious transport quickly faded until it was no longer perceptible. Landing their black-camouflaged plane back at their secret base at Nha Trang, South Vietnam, the Chinese flight crew headed for debriefing. Another “black op” by the U.S. Air Force's First Flight Detachment was complete. This article lifts the curtain of secrecy on the long-hidden story of “First Flight,” the Air Force's most secret Special Operations unit of the Vietnam War.

Taking the War to Hanoi



President Lyndon Johnson

This story begins in January 1964 when President Lyndon Johnson reluctantly approved a proposal for the U.S. military to initiate a covert unconventional warfare campaign against North Vietnam in an effort to get the Hanoi to stop supporting the communist Viet Cong insurgency in South Vietnam. At that time, the Viet Cong were steadily gaining the upper hand in their fight to topple the South Vietnamese regime that the U.S. supported in accordance with its Cold War strategy of “containing” the expansion of communism. Johnson and his advisors saw covert action as one way to apply pressure on Hanoi without significantly expanding the war, by sending major U.S. ground troops into combat or launching American airstrikes against North Vietnam. Since 1961, the CIA had been conducting a covert UW campaign against North Vietnam, but their effort had been very limited in scope and the results were disappointing. Now it was the Pentagon's turn, and Johnson wanted results quickly.

As a covert action, the UW campaign – designated OPLAN 34A – had to be carried out in such a way that

U.S. involvement was concealed. Johnson did not want the North Vietnamese or their Soviet or communist Chinese allies publicly protesting American “aggression.” After all, violating another nation's sovereign territory with an armed force is considered an “act of war” -- a situation technically circumvented by using a ‘civilian’ agency, like CIA, but riskier when U.S. military forces are involved.

The OPLAN 34A unconventional warfare plan included surreptitiously inserting sabotage teams and intelligence agents into North Vietnam, keeping them resupplied, and extracting them if need be. Other missions included conducting small seaborne commando raids along the coast of North Vietnam, various Psychological Warfare operations, including passing leaflets and small single-station radios to the North Vietnamese population, dropping “gift kits” to peasants, and various other “black ops” intended to convince North Vietnamese leaders there was an anti-communist insurgency brewing on their own turf.

In January 1964, the U.S. Military Assistance Command in Vietnam secretly created an ad hoc Joint Unconventional Warfare Task Force to execute OPLAN 34A. The JUWTF was initially called the MACV Special Operations Group, but more clever minds soon changed this to a less descriptive cover name, the Studies and Observations Group. The organization was officially abbreviated MACV-SOG, but, to those in the unit, it was either “MACSOG,” or simply “SOG.”

SOG gets an Air Force

When MACSOG was set up in early 1964, the U.S. Air Force had virtually no capability to fly the kinds of covert air missions contemplated for OPLAN 34A. At that time, the Air Force's dedicated unconventional warfare units resided in four Air National Guard squadrons, but these were not organized for a genuine covert role. The Air Force would have to create a new unit from scratch, and do it quickly. Known as the First Flight Detachment, or simply “First Flight,” the new unit was specifically set up to provide MACSOG with a covert air infiltration capability.

The MACSOG commander was given direct operational control of First Flight. For this reason, and because First Flight flew missions exclusively for MACSOG, some of SOG's commanders – all U.S. Army colonels – often considered First Flight to be more of a SOG unit than an Air Force unit. In fact, First Flight was always an Air Force unit, albeit an unusual one. First Flight was commanded by an Air Force officer and always had at least two Air Force flight crews assigned, as well as Air Force maintenance, intelligence and administrative support

people and a considerable number of civilian contractors. First Flight made its home at Nha Trang air base, about midway up the coastline of South Vietnam, right on the edge of the South China Sea.

The Air Force needed to quickly find and train flight crews to fly SOG's covert missions. In order to give the U.S. government the "plausible deniability" it desired, the Air Force would rely on "surrogates" – non-American "third country" foreign nationals – to fly the OPLAN 34A missions over North Vietnam. Seven crews from the Republic of China on Taiwan and three crews of Vietnamese were recruited as First Flight's primary flyers. The surrogates were then secretly sent to Hurlburt Field, Fla. where they underwent special training in low altitude night navigation and air drops to "blind" (unmarked) drop zones.

Within SOG, the Chinese crews were known as "C" crews, the Vietnamese as "V" crews, and the unit's two (later four) American crews were called "A" crews. The "A" crews were forbidden from flying OPLAN 34A missions, at least initially. Their primary job was to provide flying instruction for the foreign crews. They were, however, allowed to fly logistical airlift flights within South Vietnam supporting SOG's ground elements and to perform post-maintenance check flights.

The aircraft picked for First Flight was the Fairchild C-123. Known as the "Provider," the C-123 was a rugged, two-engine assault transport built in the mid-1950s for the Air Force. C-123s were tailor-made for landing on rough, unimproved airstrips and for parachuting men and supplies. Since 1962 Air Force Providers had become a common sight at air bases and remote landing strips all over South Vietnam, and since 1963, the CIA had been secretly using a few of its own unmarked C-123s, flown by surrogate crews, for its covert missions over North Vietnam.

While the CIA's use of C-123s undoubtedly influenced the Air Force's choice of aircraft for its own operations, the CIA's experience with C-123s had revealed its shortcomings in range, load capacity and ability to safely fly night, low-altitude routes in mountainous terrain. Also, C-123s were less than optimal from a genuine "plausible deniability" perspective since they were unmistakably American-built planes and none were in the inventory of any other nation at that time. But C-123s were readily available, so the Air Force pressed on with what they had. For MACSOG, C-123s would become its primary platform for long-range covert infiltration, resupply and Psychological Operations missions.

In early 1964 the Air Force secretly assigned six of its C-123Bs to MACSOG under the codename Project Duck



Chief Master Sgt. Howard Wright stands in front of a Duck Hook C-123 in Taiwan 1969. Wright is wearing typical clothing worn by First Flight members. The bulge on the plane's nose houses electronic countermeasures equipment to detect enemy radar and a weather radar antenna above the cockpit. Courtesy photo.

Hook. Knowing it had little time to get OPLAN 34A operations up and running, the Air Force used a special, quick-reaction modification program nicknamed Big Safari to design and install mission-specific modifications to the Duck Hook C-123s. For SOG operations, the Duck Hook C-123s received new navigation equipment, additional radios and surface-to-air missile radar detectors. Also, new crew stations were created for an electronic warfare officer and a radio operator.

The Duck Hook C-123s were also "sanitized" by removing as many incriminating "made-in-the-U.S." stickers, stencils and markings from components inside the airplanes as practicable, and all Air Force insignia and tail numbers from the outside of the planes. Also, the

official records of the six Duck Hook C-123s were deleted from Air Force files.

The planes were initially given a nondescript gray paint job, but this was later changed to a dark night camouflage scheme. The mostly black and dark green camouflage inspired First Flight members and others who saw the planes in various places around Southeast Asia to nickname these mysterious birds, the “Black Bird 123s.” Special frames were built on the exterior of the planes so that various national insignia could be quickly attached or removed, depending on the “cover” story for that particular flight. Having lost their official identities, each of the Duck Hook planes were thereafter identified by new codenames, “Whiskey Alpha”, “Whiskey Bravo,” “Whiskey Charlie,” and so on.

Into the Secret War

In December 1964, Flight Detachment began flying covert missions over North Vietnam. Initially all OPLAN 34A missions over “denied” airspace were flown using only the unit’s Chinese or Vietnamese flight crews. First Flight’s missions included resupplying intelligence teams inserted earlier by the CIA, dropping additional agents to reinforce those teams and infiltrating SOG’s own agents and teams into enemy territory. They also dropped leaflets, small transistor radios (tuned to a radio station purported to be run by Hanoi, but really run by SOG), and “gift kits” for North Vietnamese peasants.

A typical First Flight combat mission began at its home base at Nha Trang. After takeoff, the C-123 usually proceeded to a forward staging base closer to enemy territory where the crew would land, refuel and wait for nightfall. Danang Air Base in northern South Vietnam was often used. Wherever they went in their Black Bird C-123s, the flight crews and any American ground support personnel with them wore only civilian clothes.

When darkness fell, the C-123 would depart the staging base and proceed into North Vietnam, often through the “back door” which is to say, by slipping into enemy territory from Laos instead of making a more dangerous coastal penetration from the sea. Flying as low as they dared in the moonlight, the crews used mountainous terrain to mask their plane from enemy radars, and to minimize exposure to enemy anti-aircraft gunfire. Flying low at night in this kind of terrain, sometimes through rainy and cloudy weather, was extremely hazardous, even without the dangers of the enemy defenses. First Flight’s C-123s were not equipped with terrain-avoidance radars, and night vision goggles for the pilots had not yet been invented. The risk of slamming into a mountainside hidden in the darkness was very real; this is exactly how one Duck Hook crew and plane was lost.

When the target drop zone was in the northern part of North Vietnam, the crews faced the increased threat of Soviet-built radar-guided SA-2 surface-to-air missiles and radar-equipped, radar-directed MiG fighter-interceptors as well as hundreds of anti-aircraft guns. One Duck Hook C-123 on a low-level agent infiltration mission was riddled with enemy gunfire right over their drop zone, but the wounded crew managed to bring their damaged bird back to base.

Leaflet drops were among the most dangerous missions because they required the C-123 crews to leave the relative safety of low altitude as they neared their target area to quickly climb to a much higher altitude where they would release their leaflets so they could flutter down far and wide. But this tactic greatly increased the crew’s exposure to detection by enemy radar and engagement by SAMs or MiGs.

First Flight C-123 instructor pilot Maj. Fred Heitzhausen, who in 1966 flew the first all-American-crewed mission over North Vietnam, recalls his first leaflet drop as “the scariest, spookiest night of my life.” Immediately after completing the leaflet drop at 14,000 feet, Heitzhausen pulled off all engine power, rolled his plane over into a steep 90 degree bank, then plunged down toward the pitch black jungle below, diving 4,000 feet in only 40 seconds to get to low altitude as quickly as possible to minimize exposure to the enemy defenses. It took him another 5,000 feet of altitude just to pull out of the dive without hitting the ground. The pilot remembers this not-quite-by-the-book combat tactic as “a hairy maneuver, to say the least.”



First Flight Detachment C-123K taxis at Da Nang, South Vietnam in 1970, with removable U.S. AirForce insignia barely visible. The plane is also painted with nonstandard “night” camouflage. U.S. Air Force courtesy photo.



A First Flight C-123 at Nha Trang, South Vietnam, 1970. The plane's tail number is covered and the U.S. Air Force insignia is removable. Photo by Cecil Morgan.

In 1965 Johnson approved an expansion of SOG's covert operations into the officially off-limits territories of Laos and Cambodia. First Flight quickly began using its C-123s, flown by the American crews, on cross-border infiltration and resupply missions over these "denied" areas supporting clandestine reconnaissance teams. The Government of the Republic of China would not allow the U.S. to use the "C" crews to fly missions against Laotian targets because Taiwan had diplomatic relations with Laos. Operations into Laos and Cambodia involved supporting small reconnaissance teams, often led by U.S. Special Forces Soldiers, who would silently penetrate into the enemy sanctuaries to report on North Vietnamese resupply networks, ambush enemy troops, locate targets for airstrikes, or "snatch" (capture) enemy soldiers for interrogation.

Use of the Vietnamese crews was soon discontinued but the "C" crews continued to be key assets for SOG throughout First Flight's existence. Heitzhausen remembers the Chinese crews as being "professional and competent." In their second year of OPLAN 34A operations, the White House authorized the "A" crews to

begin flying missions over North Vietnam.

In 1968 the First Flight C-123s were pressed into service in the epic aerial resupply effort to support the surrounded Marine garrison at Khe Sanh. On one such mission, First Flight flight mechanic Jimmy Pruett was tasked to fly a load of ammo and food with a part American, part Chinese crew. After a quick offload under fire, Pruett ended up backhauling so many wounded troops and tired, worn out Marines that he could barely get their ramp closed for take off.

Heavy maintenance for the secret Duck Hook C-123s was accomplished at a secure facility in Taipei, Taiwan, which, as American First Flight commander and instructor pilot Maj. Roger Gibson remembers, had its particular perks for the SOG troops back at Nha Trang. While he was the officer in charge of overseeing maintenance in Taipei, Gibson would receive special orders via SOG's secure radio net from C-123s headed for Taiwan. He would procure a planeload of liquid refreshments and other morale-boosting goodies to put on the next Black Bird C-123 headed back to the war.

In November 1968, Johnson ordered all U.S. combat

operations against North Vietnam to cease, including all OPLAN 34A activity, in his final effort to kickstart peace negotiations with Hanoi. Subsequently, First Flight concentrated on supporting SOG's recon teams operating clandestinely inside Laos and Cambodia. Many of the unit's flights involved airlifting the recon teams from their main bases at Camp Long Thanh or Nha Trang, to closer "jump off" sites at Kontum, Ban Me Thuot, or Kham Duc, South Vietnam, or Udorn and Nakhon Phanom, Thailand. The use of Thai air bases by First Flight C-123s was especially politically sensitive to the Thai government, and great care was taken by the aircrew and maintenance troops not to look like U.S. military personnel when in Thailand, and their Black Bird C-123s had all Air Force insignia removed before operating there.

When it became clear in 1969 that newly elected President Nixon was not interested in restarting the covert unconventional warfare campaign in North Vietnam, the need to retain First Flight's special, covert capability was increasingly debated by senior commanders in Vietnam. First Flight's C-123s recently given the new code name Heavy Hook were valued for their ability to fly long-range covert airborne infiltration and resupply, but helicopters were better suited for many of SOG's short-range operations into Laos and Cambodia. Also, since October 1966, four new and more capable C-130E-I Skyhooks (MC-130E Combat Talons) had been assigned to SOG, but these overtly U.S. Air Force planes were limited to clandestine operations, not covert missions. In the end, MACV decided they still needed First Flight's unique capabilities, and throughout 1970 and 1971, First Flight's American and Chinese crews continued flying combat missions, daily logistical airlift runs and training flights.

In early 1972 it was finally decided to shut down MACSOG's operations in accordance with Nixon's "Vietnamization" strategy which included the steady withdrawal of U.S. combat forces from Southeast Asia. First Flight Detachment stood down on March 1, 1972, and was quietly disbanded at the end of the month. The unit's Americans were reassigned; the long-serving Chinese crews returned to Taiwan and the four surviving Heavy Hook C-123s were transferred to the Republic of China Air Force.

Summary and Conclusion

During its eight years of existence from 1964 to 1972, the First Flight Detachment played a significant role in the covert unconventional warfare campaign in "denied" territories – North Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia – where the U.S. government's official position was that Americans were not involved in any kind of activities on the ground. First Flight supported the full gamut of

MACSOG's UW activities, including special reconnaissance, guerrilla warfare, intelligence collection, Psychological Operations and personnel recovery. The unit flew numerous covert combat missions into the enemy's sanctuaries and thousands of airlift missions providing essential and secure logistical support for SOG's ground units.

After the war it was determined that most, if not all, of the agent operations in North Vietnam supported by First Flight had failed. But many of First Flight's other operations, from its missions to "infiltrate" and "resupply" phantom insurgent teams that never existed, to showering the North Vietnamese population with subversive PSYOP material, diverted elements of the enemy's armed forces from the war effort in South Vietnam to internal security duty. Furthermore, First Flight's crews directly supported the incredibly courageous SOG recon teams that harassed, damaged and diverted North Vietnamese forces operating in the enemy's Laotian and Cambodian sanctuaries. To be sure, Washington's fatally flawed leadership never allowed SOG's UW campaign to be of sufficient scope and intensity to fulfill its potential. But there can be no doubt the efforts of SOG's covert Airmen played a definite role in reducing the enemy's ability to inflict casualties on our forces fighting in Southeast Asia. And it is essential to acknowledge the major role played by the Republic of China's brave and skilled flyers who risked their lives as trusted allies of the U.S. for so many years.

The unit lost four of C-123s and their crews, including at least two American Airmen killed in action. None of the planes went down in "denied" territory. On many missions, the C-123s were damaged by enemy ground fire, and on at least one occasion, several flight crew members were badly wounded.

First Flight broke new ground for the Air Force in the art of clandestine operations, including the use of third-country surrogate flight crews, sanitized, unmarked aircraft and other special security practices. Indeed, the very existence of First Flight Detachment remained secret until decades after the war ended and the unit no longer existed. Ultimately, the story of First Flight is not just a fascinating chapter in the history of Air Force Special Operations; it can also serve as a source of unique and hard-earned lessons in the potential conduct of clandestine air operations by U.S. Special Operations Command in the future.

The author wishes to thank the following Air Force veterans of the First Flight Detachment for their contributions to the research for this article: Roger Gibson, Russ McCarthy, Cleveland Colston, Fred Heitzhausen, Wayne Haring, Jimmy Pruett, Howard Wright, Bill Palmisano, Bill Higgins and Cecil Morgan.

Operation Just Cause marks 20th anniversary

By USSOCOM History Office

The December 1989 invasion of Panama, known as Operation Just Cause, was an unusually delicate and complex operation. Its key objectives were the capture of Manuel Noriega, Panama's de facto leader, and the establishment of a democratic government. Special Operations Forces in Operation Just Cause demonstrated just how far they had come since the Desert One operation in 1980, not only with regard to internal enhancements to SOF capabilities, but also with regard to the close integration of SOF and conventional forces.

The Special Operations component of Joint Task Force South (the overall invasion force) was the Joint Special Operations Task Force, commanded by Maj. Gen. Wayne Downing. It was organized into three smaller task forces: The first consisted of the Army Rangers, the second of Navy SEALs and Special Boat Unit assets, and the third of Army Special Forces. These task forces were supported by Psychological Operations and Civil Affairs units, Army Special Operations helicopters and Air Force air commando units.

Task Force Missions

H-hour was 1 a.m. Dec. 20, and the JSOTF's principal H-hour missions were the capture of Noriega and the destruction of the Panamanian Defense Forces' ability to fight. As it turned out, the U.S. forces did not know Noriega's location at H-hour; accordingly, the JSOTF focused on the missions against the PDF.

The Rangers' task force was the largest component of the JSOTF. In addition to the Army's 75th Ranger Regiment, it was reinforced by contingents from the 4th Psychological Operations Group and 96th Civil Affairs Battalion. It included Air Force Special Tactics teams (Combat Controllers and Pararescuemen) and Marine Corps air/naval gunfire liaison troops. Close air support aircraft included AH-6 attack helicopters from the 160th SOAR (A), AC-130H gunships from the 1st Special Operations Wing, and, from the conventional forces, AH-64 Apaches and F-117A stealth bombers.

The task force performed two simultaneous airborne


assaults: One contingent parachuted onto the Omar Torrijos International Airport/Tocumen Military Airport complex, while another dropped onto Rio Hato airfield, 65 miles west of Panama City. Upon securing these objectives, the task force linked up with conventional forces for follow-on combat operations.

The Naval Special Warfare component of the JSOTF established operations at Rodman Naval Station on the west side of the Panama Canal. The task force consisted of five SEAL platoons, three patrol boats, four riverine patrol boats and two light patrol boats (22-foot Boston Whalers), which were divided among four task units, each with its own H-hour mission:

Task Unit Papa, the largest, was to deny use of the Paitilla Airfield; TU Whiskey was to destroy a Panamanian patrol boat in Balboa Harbor; TU Charlie and TU Foxtrot were charged with securing, respectively, the Caribbean and Pacific entrances to the Panama Canal. By 1:05 a.m. Dec. 20, the SEALs of TU Papa were outside the hangar that housed Noriega's jet. After a short but fierce firefight, PDF defenders withdrew. Four SEALs died and eight others were wounded in the operation.

TU Whiskey's H-hour mission was to destroy a Panamanian patrol boat, the Presidente Poras, docked in Balboa Harbor. Around 11 p.m. Dec. 19, two combat rubber raider craft left Rodman Naval Station, cut across the canal, passing vessels, and tied up in a mangrove stand near the docks. Two SEALs slipped overboard for the swim to the patrol boat. At 1 a.m., an explosion ripped a hole in the Presidente Poras, and it sank. Following the Balboa Harbor mission, TU Whiskey participated in the seizure of Noriega's yacht on Dec. 20 and the capture of the Balboa Yacht Club the next day.

TU Charlie, assigned to secure the Caribbean side of the Panama Canal, worked closely with TF Atlantic. On the night of the invasion, TU Charlie blocked all ships from entering the canal and patrolled the shipping



Rangers from Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, prepare to take La Comandancia in the El Chorrillo neighborhood of Panama City, December 1989.

channel near Colon, preventing the PDF from commandeering boats and protecting the canal from sabotage.

TU Foxtrot conducted maritime patrols along the Pacific Ocean approaches to the Panama Canal. At H-hour, SEALs in three patrol boats guarded the waters around Howard Air Force Base, and two riverine patrol boats covered the approaches to the Bridge of the Americas. On Dec. 21, the SEALs located and searched Passe Porte Tout and Macho de Monde, two of Noriega's sport yachts, capturing 18 Panamanians and large quantities of small arms and ammunition.

The third major task force was made up of units from 7th SFG (A). It had the use of five MH-60 helicopters from the 617th Special Operations Aviation Detachment and two UH-60 helicopters from the 1st Battalion, 228th Aviation Regiment. Air Force AC-130s from the 1st Special Operations Wing were available to provide fire support.

A major mission for the task force was to seize and deny use of the Pacora River Bridge, which would prevent PDF's Battalion 2000 from moving out of Fort Cimarron to Panama City. As the helicopters neared the bridge at H-hour, the lead helicopter pilot spotted a column of six PDF vehicles approaching. The mission had become a race between the SF troops and the PDF convoy to see who would take the bridge first. After a fierce fight that included AC-130 aircraft providing direct-fire support, the Americans seized and held the bridge.

Another Special Forces H-hour mission was to take Panamanian TV Channel 2 off the air. The mission was given to Operational Detachment Alpha 785 augmented by technical experts. At 12:50 a.m. Dec. 20, the 18-man team fast-roped from two helicopters near the TV broadcasting complex in the mountains northeast of Panama City. The PDF guards fled, the team took control of the complex, and the technical experts disabled the station.

"Ma Bell" Missions

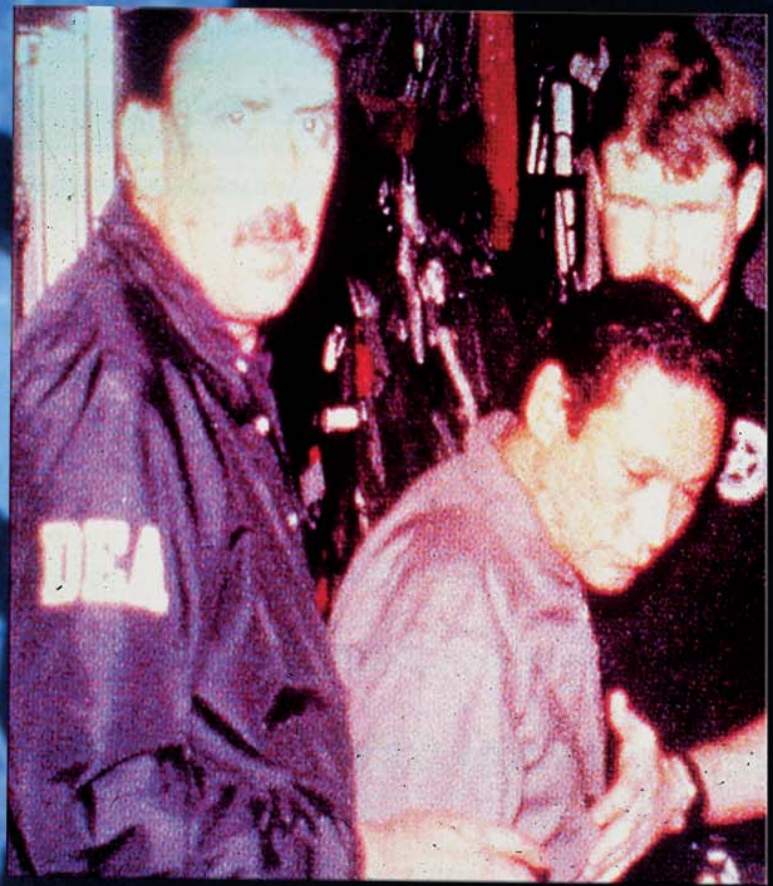
During the initial invasion, U.S. forces had captured Panama City, its airport, the areas near the Panama Canal, and Rio Hato, but in the countryside the PDF still had nominal control scattered throughout the country in small garrisons (cuartels). No one knew what these PDF forces would do, as each cuartel was cut off from higher headquarters. The Americans could have easily crushed these posts, but this would have produced many casualties, destroyed Panamanian villages and alienated the populace. The U.S. instead developed a strategy of capitulation missions, with American forces contacting the PDF enclaves and offering them the opportunity to surrender before being attacked. Because of the heavy reliance on telephones, these missions were nicknamed "Ma Bell" operations. During a 10-day period, Army Special Forces elements were instrumental in the surrender of 14 cuartels, almost 2,000 troops, and more than 6,000 weapons without a single U.S. casualty. Several high-ranking associates of Noriega, who were on the most-wanted list, were also captured in Ma Bell operations.

Noriega's capture

The invasion culminated with Noriega's apprehension. Although the JSOTF had missed capturing him at H-hour on Dec. 20, SOF targeted his known associates and hiding places in Panama. With few places to hide, Noriega sought refuge at the Papal Nunciature—the Vatican's embassy—on Dec. 24. JSOTF forces surrounded and isolated the Nunciature and, in conjunction with U.S. State Department and Vatican diplomats, began to negotiate Noriega's surrender. Over the next 10 days, JSOTF units kept watch over the Nunciature and maintained order over the large crowds gathering nearby. On the evening of Jan. 3, 1990, shortly after 10,000 anti-Noriega demonstrators had ended a rally outside the Nunciature, the former Panamanian dictator walked out and surrendered to the JSOTF forces.



Operation Just Cause **Dec. 20, 1989 through Jan. 31, 1990**



**SPECIAL OPERATORS WHO LOST THEIR LIVES
SERVING IN AND PREPARING FOR
OPERATIONS ENDURING FREEDOM, IRAQI FREEDOM
AND OVERSEAS CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS
WILL NEVER BE FORGOTTEN.**



Army Staff Sgt.
Rusty H. Christian
1st SFG (A)



Army
Pfc. Marc P. Decoteau
4th POG (A)



Army Staff Sgt.
Matthew A. Pucino
20th SFG (A)



Army Capt.
David J. Thompson
3rd SFG (A)

**Editor's note: Honored are SOF
who lost their lives since
November's
Tip of the Spear.⁴³**

A full-page photograph with a monochromatic red and orange color scheme. It depicts a person in silhouette, wearing a helmet and tactical gear, standing on a dark, rocky terrain at night. A bright flare is held in their right hand, creating a large, intense light source that casts long, dramatic rays across the scene. The background is dark and hazy, suggesting a coastal or island environment. The overall mood is gritty and intense, typical of military training documentation.

A THIRD PHASE STUDENT IN BASIC UNDERWATER DEMOLITION/SEAL TRAINING IS ILLUMINATED BY A FLARE DURING A NIGHT SHOOT ON SAN CLEMENTE ISLAND, CALIF. THE THIRD PHASE OF BUD/S FOCUSES ON LAND WARFARE AND INCLUDES TRAINING IN PISTOL, RIFLE, DEMOLITIONS AND TACTICAL MOVEMENT.

PHOTO BY PETTY OFFICER 3RD CLASS BLAKE MIDNIGHT.